

NASPE Innovative State Human Resources Management

Veteran Fellowship Program

Washington State

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Background

In May 2013, Governor Jay Inslee signed [Executive Order 13-01](#) establishing requirements for cabinet agencies to develop veteran employment plans and charging the State HR Division and its partners to develop resources to assist agencies in reaching their veteran hiring goals.

The OFM State HR Division created the Washington State Veteran Fellowship Program to support the goal of increasing the number of veterans hired in state government through a comprehensive multi-agency approach that exposes the Veteran Fellowship Candidate to the wide variety of careers in state service, while affording agencies the opportunity to network with skilled veteran talent.

Program Overview

Vet Corps Peer Mentors, employed by the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, aid candidates in developing unique experiential learning plans (job shadow schedules) based on the state's professional job groupings, crosswalks to military occupational specialties, and the varied interests of applicants related to state service. Plans are centered on various areas including: agency/job mission, legislative impact, organization structure, customer centered actions, career management, and networking. By providing individualized experiences related to candidate's interests, we foster greater understanding of state career opportunities and culture while also creating a bridge between military experience and state opportunities.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the program are based on participant experience, understanding of the state's application processes, development of professional networks, and understanding of what careers best suit the participant's transition goals. The state will measure impacts on the quality of veteran applications and percentage of participants hired. Results of the program will be shared with partner programs and agencies, agency HR offices, and local media outlets as appropriate.

1. Please provide a brief description of the program.

The Washington State Veterans Fellowship Program is a dedicated job shadow program that affords transitioning service members an opportunity to sample careers that match their unique transferable skills across the broad spectrum of state agencies. Each agency partner has identified a cadre of coaches who will allow the candidates to shadow them while they perform standard duties. A job shadow template guides how the time is spent between coaches and candidates. Key reference points help candidates understand similarities between state and military service. Each candidate, with the support of a Vet Corps peer mentor, plans 40 non-consecutive hours in the program to reinforce the networking and career planning focus learned during the transition process. This program aligns and brings together many standard transition support services from the state's Employment Security Department, Department of Veteran Affairs, State Human Resources Office, agency HR programs, and the transition assistance program at Joint Base Lewis-McChord

2. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

The Washington State Veterans Fellowship Program is in the second quarter of its first year and has been operational for 4 months.

3. Why was this program created? (What problem[s] or issues does it address?)

Washington State is home to 32,000+ active duty personnel. Hundreds separate from service each month and select Washington State as their home. The annual unemployment rate in the US for Iraq and Afghanistan era veterans in 2012 was 9.9%. This is well above the national unemployment rate of 7.8%. In our state; the annual unemployment rate for the Iraq and Afghanistan era veterans in 2012 was 12.3%, compared to the statewide unemployment rate of 7.6%.

The Washington State Veterans Fellowship Program was created to address the poor branding of state jobs within the military community, while exposing state agencies to the talent base in the military community. We expect that the program will lead to faster and more effective transition of service members into civilian public sector jobs. If successful, the program will serve as a model for other jurisdictions.

4. Why is this program a new and creative method?

This program is a new and creative method for attracting top veteran talent into state government because it is based on a collaborative effort between civilian and military partners at the state and Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Never before has a public sector employer been so welcomed and influential in the military community. We knew that there was talent in the community, but had difficulties getting them to competitively market themselves. At the same time, we had internal challenges translating the core skills of transitioning service members and understanding their leadership culture. The Veterans Fellowship Program addresses these issues by pre-exposing veteran candidates to our various state work environments and professional networks. This is also the first time transitioning service members and being allowed to leave the base to participate in programs like this, and the first time state agencies have been willing (in mass) to open their doors to a new kind of visitor and expose them to the valuable work we do in an effort to entice them to join our ranks as they leave military service.

5. What was the program's startup costs?

The start-up budget for the Veteran's Fellowship program is based on the following:

- One Statewide Planning & Strategy Specialist, 528 hours (3 months) dedicated to program development and implementation.
- One Administrative Assistant 3, 176 hours, dedicated to administrative support.

- Remaining dollars were allocated for materials and supplies for training agency coaches and meetings with stakeholders.

Activity	Hourly Rate	Hours	Total
Program Development and Implementation	\$35.27	528	\$18,622.56
Administrative Support	\$26.32	176	\$ 4,632.32
Materials & Supplies			\$ 1,745.12
Total			\$25,000.00

6. What are the program’s operational costs?

The operational budget for the Veteran’s Fellowship program is based on the following:

- One Statewide Planning & Strategy Specialist, 1920 hours (12 months) dedicated to program management and quality control.
- One Administrative Assistant 3, 640 hours, dedicated to administrative support.
- Remaining dollars were allocated for materials and supplies for training advertising, travel and meetings with stakeholders.

Activity	Hourly Rate	Hours	Total
Program Development and Implementation	\$35.27	1920	\$ 67,718.40
Administrative Support	\$26.32	640	\$ 16,844.80
Materials & Supplies			\$ 2,000.00
Total			\$ 86,563.20

7. How is this program funded?

This program costs were absorbed within existing resources of the Planning and Strategy section of State Human Resources, Office of Financial Management.

8. Did this program originate in your state?

Yes, this program originated in Washington State and was originally modeled after a Port of Seattle program of the same name.

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If yes, how does this program differ?

We are not aware of similar programs in other states.

10. How do you measure the success of this program?

Measurement of the Veteran's Fellowship Program includes:

- Tracking fellowship program graduates applications, interviews and employment via the state On-Line Recruitment System. Quantitative targets: 80% of fellowship participants apply for state jobs; 35% of participants are hired to a job within state government within the first year.
- The following measurements will be determined using a structured pre and post-interview process:
 - Improve the perception of veteran applicants among hiring managers, recruiters and Agency Coaches.
 - Increase veterans' awareness of the state application process and interests in career opportunities with the state.
 - Improve the utilization of veteran's transition services and resources.

11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The program originally allowed the candidates to receive their coach matches when they received their welcome packet. This caused some issues with continuity and peer mentoring with Vet Corps Representatives. We wanted to make sure candidates were using key Vet Corps services as part of this program. Now, a welcome email is drafted to participants, but coach lists are kept by Vet Corps staff until candidates make contact with them to receive peer mentoring services and access to their matches.