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Onward to Opportunity: A Case for Patient Philanthropy, Supporting Jobs and Careers for Military-Connected Americans

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ONWARD
TO
OPPORTUNITY

A Case for Patient Philanthropy, Supporting Jobs and Careers for Military-Connected Americans

December 2018



**INSTITUTE FOR
VETERANS AND
MILITARY FAMILIES**

Syracuse University JPMorgan Chase & Co., Founding Partner

**ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR
VETERANS AND MILITARY
FAMILIES AT SYRACUSE
UNIVERSITY (IVMF)**

The Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) is the first interdisciplinary national institute in higher education focused on the social, economic, education, and policy issues impacting veterans and their families. Through its professional staff and experts, the IVMF delivers leading programs in career, vocational, and entrepreneurship education and training, while also conducting actionable research, policy analysis, and program evaluations. The IVMF also supports communities through collective impact efforts that enhance delivery and access to services and care. The Institute, supported by a distinguished advisory board, along with public and private partners, is committed to advancing the lives of those who have served in America's armed forces and their families. For more information, visit ivmf.syracuse.edu.

**ONWARD
TO
OPPORTUNITY**

Onward to Opportunity (O2O) is an unprecedented public-private collaboration between the Department of Defense, Schultz Family Foundation, JPMorgan Chase & Co., and the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University that provides in-demand, industry-validated training and curriculum to transitioning service members up to six months prior to the point of separation, veterans, National Guard and Reservists, as well as to all military connected spouses. After completion of the course, the program then links this population with the nation's leading private sector companies.

O2O brings together the long-standing curriculum development and program delivery expertise of the IVMF; the honed personal touch of service member coaching and mentoring of Hire Heroes USA; and the philanthropic resources of the Schultz Family Foundation and JPMorgan Chase & Co. O2O has the potential to fundamentally shift how the private sector engages and supports our service members and their families as they navigate the transition to civilian life.

For more information, visit onward2opportunity.org.

**THANK YOU TO OUR
SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS**

O2O was launched in partnership with the Schultz Family Foundation (SFF). As the program has grown other supporters and partners have joined in this effort to make a sustainable and long-term impact among the military connected community as they transition to civilian life.



JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.



May & Stanley Smith
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“The fact that the O2O provides training and professional certifications for military spouses is impressive to me. I cannot say enough good things about the program. From start to finish, wherever it is you want to go, they will get you there.”

Kim Stirling
Navy Spouse, SPHR



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FOREWORD



Onward to Opportunity is personal for both of us. Howard's father served in the Army in the South Pacific during World War II. This was a time when all of America was engaged in the cause of the nation's defense, and when every American was connected to someone – mother, father, brother, or friend – who served in uniform.

Today, America's post-9/11 wars represent the longest period of sustained military conflict in our history. However, unlike World War II, the burden of these wars is increasingly shouldered by a shrinking cadre of volunteers qualified and willing to serve in the nation's armed forces.

Over the past decade, we became aware of a growing civilian/military divide and how it impacts service members and their families as they transition back to civilian life. We were particularly struck not only by the tremendous sacrifice made by our service women and men, but also by how often that sacrifice and the benefits to the civilian sector are unrecognized by American society. We also learned that the assumptions, stereotypes, and false beliefs about who veterans are and what they offer society represent a missed opportunity for all of us. For these reasons, we decided to act.

Through our family foundation we partnered with Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families to develop and support the Onward to Opportunity program.

Onward to Opportunity was created to set the conditions to best utilize and build upon the knowledge, talents, experiences, and perspectives of those who have volunteered to serve and protect our country. Put differently, our philanthropy is motivated by both a desire to honor the service of our veterans, but also born from the opportunity to connect employers to one of this country's deepest pools of workforce ready talent.

From the beginning of this journey, we recognized that achieving our vision would require a long-term commitment and robust collaboration between the public and private sectors. We also recognized that only by leveraging the collective expertise of "everyone in the room," would we be able to offer our veterans meaningful pathways to what research suggests is the foundation of a successful and productive post-service life – a career.

Our goal is to inform and set a higher standard for our nation's collective efforts in service to America's veterans and their families by detailing what we accomplished and how. With this white paper, we hope to illuminate how others can do the same.

We owe it to our veterans, their families and the nation to become connected to their experience and success.

Sheri Schultz
president and co-founder
Schultz Family Foundation

Howard Schultz
co-founder
Schultz Family Foundation



Matthew Miller
Fort Bragg, North Carolina

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The costs and consequences associated with a failed or sub-optimal employment transition - for the service member, his or her family, and for society - are often catastrophic.

One of the foundational assumptions of the all-volunteer military is the proposition that the military service experience confers to volunteers certain post-service advantages, to include an accelerated and enhanced pathway to civilian employment after service. However, despite an economy approaching full employment, many veterans still struggle to successfully navigate the civilian world of work. The costs and consequences associated with a failed or sub-optimal employment transition—for the service member, his or her family, and for society—are often catastrophic.

This paper details an exemplar case of partnership and philanthropic engagement, positioned to fundamentally transform the means and expectations associated with the employment transition experience for veterans. The vehicle for this transformation is an innovative transition initiative called Onward to Opportunity (O2O). The design, development, and evolution of the O2O program has been supported by early investment and prolonged commitment on the part of philanthropic partners—led by the Schultz Family Foundation—alongside close collaboration with JPMorgan Chase & Co. as well as other public sector and employer partners. These partnerships have, in turn, mobilized and empowered otherwise disparate stakeholders to come together to address the complex and multi-faceted challenges associated with the employment transition, in unprecedented ways and at unparalleled scale.



Since the program's inception in 2015, almost 20,000 service members, veterans, and military spouses in all 50 states and abroad have been skilled, with over 11,000 of these subsequently transitioning to employment or enhanced employment as a result. The O2O case serves as a blueprint for efforts to catalyze public engagement, drive long-term impact, and motivate policy change related to whole-of-society engagement in support of helping veterans navigate the often challenging transition from military to civilian life.

Since the program's inception in 2015, almost 20,000 service members, veterans, and military spouses in all 50 states and abroad have been skilled, with over 11,000 of these subsequently transitioning to employment or enhanced employment as a result.

PHASES OF THE O2O PROGRAM

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5
Learner Assessment and Program Placement	Skills Development—Onward to Your Career	Industry-Specific Skills Development and Advisory Services	Industry Recognized Credentialing	Purpose-Built Pathway to Jobs and Careers



KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS: PARTNERSHIP AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

1. ADAPTATION TO CHANGING AMERICAN WORKFORCE
2. TAILORED ADVISEMENT & CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS ENHANCE SERVICE DELIVERY
3. ACCESS AND SCALE

FINDINGS: MILITARY TRANSITION & POLICY

1. COST SAVINGS AND AVOIDANCE
2. ACCESS TO HIGH-SKILLED TALENT & TAXPAYER INVESTMENT IN HUMAN CAPITAL
3. ALIGNING THE DOD SKILLBRIDGE AUTHORITY WITH THE FUTURE WORKPLACE

INTRODUCTION

Research consistently demonstrates that post-service employment ranks among the most pressing concerns expressed by military members, veterans, and their families.

September 12th, 2018 marked a dubious milestone in the story of the longest sustained period of military conflict in American history. Specifically, September 12th represented the date upon which a citizen born after 9/11, could enlist in the U.S. military, and subsequently join the ranks of the now more than 4-million Americans who have shouldered the burden of the nation's post-9/11 wars.

Importantly, America's post-9/11 wars represent the first sustained conflict in our history to be carried out by a military composed entirely of volunteers. One of the foundational assumptions of the contemporary, all-volunteer military is the proposition that military service will confer—to those who volunteer—very specific post-service advantages in exchange for service to the nation. Some of those include access to educational opportunity, subsidized medical care, and certain types of specialized training that might otherwise be inaccessible to broad segments of the population.

However, the most compelling assumption of the all-volunteer model of military service—the narrative central to most military recruiting campaigns—is the proposition that voluntary military service will create and accelerate pathways to civilian jobs and careers. Yet, countless studies and surveys consistently demonstrate that post-service employment ranks among the most pressing concerns expressed by military members, veterans, and their families.¹

Given this fact, after 17 years of sustained war, it remains an open question as to whether or not this nation has delivered on the 'promise' that the military service experience accelerates employment opportunities after service. This is a complex question, with no straightforward answer, and it most often depends 'who you ask.'

On the whole, the story told by the data suggests that throughout much of the past decade, the rate of unemployment experienced by veterans has exceeded that of the non-veteran population. In some cases—for our youngest veterans, Native American veterans, women veterans, and those with disabilities—the differences have been extreme.² Notwithstanding, one thing we do know is that military service can be one of the last accessible pathways to creating socioeconomic mobility in America.

Today, some have suggested that the employment gap between veterans and non-veterans is an artifact of the past. Unemployment for all Americans is at a record low, and many of the nation's employers have come to recognize that veterans bring valued knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences to the workplace.³ In fact, it's true that for much of 2018, the overall unemployment rate for veterans has compared favorably to the non-veteran population. All that said, it's also true that the data—when considered on the whole—paints an incomplete picture. Put differently, it is the case that the improved employment situation of veterans as a population has masked from public view the very real employment struggles that continue to characterize some segments of the veterans' community.

Specifically, certain segments of the veterans' community still struggle to find work at rates comparable to their civilian peers, and peer-veterans of other eras.⁴ Further, employment data alone reveals very little about the nature of the employment secured by those veterans who are successful finding work after service. In truth, a great many veterans find themselves underemployed with respect to their level of skill, experience, and education.⁵ Further, recent studies reveal that more than 50 percent of veterans leave their first job after the military within a year, suggesting a sub-optimal employment transition with regard to issues of 'fit.'⁶

The consequences of unemployment and under-employment for the veteran and his or her family, particularly immediately following the transition to civilian life, are profound and well-documented. Most notably, unemployment or underemployment at the time of transition has been demonstrated to undermine the long-term financial health of the family unit, contribute to marginalized health outcomes, and has even been linked to an increased rate of suicidal ideation among veterans.⁷ While improved economic conditions have served to ease some of the financial challenges facing this population, recent data suggests that those gains are slowing.⁸

Further, the costs associated with a failed employment transition also have lasting implications for national security. For example, the costs associated with unemployment compensation for veterans are, in part, shouldered by the Department of Defense and sourced from operational budgets. Accordingly, high rates of veteran unemployment directly undercut military readiness and national security.

Given the costs and consequences associated with a failed or sub-optimal employment transition—for the service member, his or her family, and for society—it is right and appropriate that the public sector looks to the private sector for support, engagement, and innovation positioned to support a successful employment transition for those men and women who have shouldered the burden of the nation's defense. It is also right and appropriate for the private sector to respond to this call for support in this endeavor. This mutually beneficial equation lies at the heart of efforts that can be taken to close the widening civilian-military divide in this country today.

To that end, in this paper we present the case of one such innovation and partnership. Specifically, in what follows we describe the efforts of the Schultz Family Foundation, to leverage philanthropy and broad-based public engagement as a means to fundamentally transform the expectations and outcomes associated with the employment transition experience. The vehicle for this transformation is a transition initiative called Onward to Opportunity (O2O).

The O2O program is a first-of-its-kind transition initiative built to support a holistic approach to post-service career preparation, search, and placement. This O2O model supports participant access to specialized training and certification opportunities—both in-residence and online—representing 32 in-demand learning pathways, and a network of more than 800 post-training partners and employers throughout the United States and across the globe. Today the O2O program represents the largest national footprint among the DOD approved Career Skills Programs. Specifically, the O2O program is

Edward Hollis
Fort Drum, New York

The costs associated with a failed employment transition have lasting implications for national security.



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O2O Installation Locations



Since the program's inception in 2015, the O2O program has served as a pathway to jobs and careers for more than 11,000 veterans, transitioning service members and spouses, and supported thousands more to higher-education and vocational training.

currently operating on 18 military installations in the contiguous United States and Hawaii—and also online—and annually enrolling more than 8,000 participants.

Since the program's inception in 2015, the O2O program has served as a pathway to jobs and careers for more than 11,000 veterans, transitioning service members and spouses, and supported thousands more to higher-education and vocational training. For that reason, the O2O program can serve as a blueprint for efforts to catalyze public engagement, drive long-term impact, and motivate policy change related to whole-of-society engagement in support of assisting veterans navigate the often challenging transition from military to civilian life.

In what follows, we provide additional insight related to the individual and societal level implications associated with the transition experience, and then introduce the innovative, philanthropic engagement strategy—executed by the Schultz Family Foundation—that enabled the launch and evolution the O2O intervention. Finally, we conclude by detailing the O2O operational model, and offer prescriptive findings relevant to future programming and policy.

THE EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION: WHAT'S AT STAKE?

The inability to secure employment at transition is associated with compromised physical and mental health over time, as well as an increased risk of homelessness and financial strain.

The inability to secure a post-service source of income has potentially life-altering impacts on the financial stability of the veteran family in the present, and at the same time erodes future pathways to upward socio-economic mobility.⁹

While the transition to civilian life is complicated by a wide variety of factors and contexts, a clear finding stemming from more than a decade of wartime research is that securing meaningful employment at the time of transition is of paramount importance.¹⁰ Alternatively, the inability to secure employment at transition is associated with compromised physical and mental health over time, as well as an increased risk of homelessness and financial strain.¹¹ If the veteran supports a family, these consequences extend to spouses—who may have experienced their own employment challenges stemming from military service—as well as military-connected children.¹²

While these effects are significant on the individual level, a compromised employment situation for veterans also has significant implications for society. Current projections related to the costs associated with veteran's benefits—to include unemployment compensation—are expected to shortly exceed \$1 trillion.¹³ Given the strong linkage between employment and wellbeing, this estimate would trend significantly higher in the face of any extended period of economic depression, which would in turn create an additional financial burden on the Veterans Administration, private health care systems, and on other federal supportive services (e.g., HUD, HHS, Labor).

In addition, high rates of veteran unemployment squander the nation's commitment in the human capital investment represented by service members and veterans. The U.S. military is our nation's single largest workforce development institution. Contrary to popular belief, the military's initial screening and selection criteria—i.e., the basic education, physical, and moral character requirements—ensures a highly capable, civic-minded talent pool entering and leaving military service. The Department of Defense (DOD) spends billions of dollars annually to train and educate a military workforce with key skills, job occupations, and related functions found in most industries and organizations—from operations and supply chain management, to human resources, information technology, and communications.¹⁴ Given that data science, cybersecurity, and related technologies will increasingly play a central role in the future of the U.S. economy, service members and veterans are uniquely poised to contribute their technological, human, social, and professional skills to the civilian workforce.¹⁵

In short, the transferable skills of veterans are often unknown, misunderstood, or simply “lost in translation” to employers, stemming from the lack of familiarity and growing military-



Military-to-civilian transition is at once a unique, individualized, and community-situated challenge.

civilian cultural divide in the workplace.¹⁶ This situation remains a significant barrier to fully leveraging military talent in the civilian economy.

Ultimately, while preparing service members for civilian employment is extremely complex, the potential individual and societal benefits are compelling. It is the case that public-sector resources are, and will remain, central to enabling the programs and supportive services that assist veterans and their families successfully transition from military to civilian life. However, if there is a lesson to be learned from the now 17-year journey of military-connected transition programs, initiatives, and investments, it is that federal, state, and local governments cannot “do-it-alone” with regard to delivering on the promises made to our veterans and their families. Military-to-civilian transition is at once, a unique, individualized, and community-situated challenge. Thus, from a practical view, delivering on the social contract “to care for him [or her] who shall have borne the battle,”¹⁷ demands cross-sector partnership between private, public, and nonprofit organizations.

PATIENT PHILANTHROPY AS THE IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

Key to this approach is marked by early investment and prolonged commitment on the part of philanthropic partners, alongside close collaboration between funders, public sector stakeholders, and community partners.

The philanthropic sector is uniquely positioned to assume an influential and unifying role with regard to addressing complex problems such as military-to-civilian transition, particularly in the area of employment. However, many would argue that as related to addressing the challenges facing the nation's service-members, veterans, and families, this potential has yet to be broadly realized.

Public-private partnerships have been for decades, a compelling strategy to extend and enhance the pathways supporting robust social service delivery. More recently, non-contractual alliances between public sector entities and non-profit organizations—based in active, horizontal collaborations and strategic partnerships—have become prevalent.¹⁸ The Social Innovation Fund, introduced in 2009 by the Corporation for National and Community Service, is a recent example of such a partnership. Research highlights both the benefits and risks inherent in these types of collaborations; likewise, outcomes and attitudes remain mixed with regard to the efficacy and sustainability of public sector partnerships with private sector entities, as a strategy to address complex social issues.¹⁹

In the very specific case of strategic collaborations between the public sector and private sector philanthropy (e.g., foundations, trusts, etc.), research illustrates that if such partnerships are appropriately structured and incentivized, they can powerfully set the conditions for funded interventions to deliver compelling and enduring impact. This is particularly true in the context of collaborations designed to impact social and socio-economic concerns. For example, a recent study illustrates how and why appropriately structured public-philanthropic partnerships not only mitigate the public expenditure associated with addressing complex socio-economic challenges, but at the same time—and less intuitively—such collaborations also increase overall community awareness and support for the specific social cause that the partnership was created to address.²⁰

To that end, scholars and practitioners have recently embraced an approach to collaboration between the public sector and private philanthropy, which has been termed relational or “patient” philanthropy. This approach is marked by early investment and prolonged commitment on the part of philanthropic partners, alongside close collaboration between funders, public sector stakeholders, and community partners. The logic supporting this approach is based on the assumption that long-term funding commitments and collaborative program development cultivates relational capital between stakeholders, which in turn escalates their shared commitment to collaboratively address complex and multi-faceted challenges.



A patient philanthropy approach is uniquely effective as a means to catalyze public engagement, drive long-term impact, and motivate policy change.

In practice, this approach to philanthropic strategy often involves one or more funders committing to significant investments positioned to align subject matter expertise and intermediary partners in support of program design, execution, and evaluation, as well as ongoing openness and flexibility positioned to allow for adaptation based on changing conditions, lessons learned, and emerging opportunities for impact. Scholars have found that this strategy “work[s] best when philanthropists step up early to focus public attention and attract other funders, invest for the long haul, respect government processes, and seize opportunities as they arise.”²¹ When embraced, studies have demonstrated that a patient philanthropy approach is uniquely effective as a means to catalyze public engagement, drive long-term impact, and motivate policy change.²²

The case of advancing veteran employment is certainly a complex and multi-faceted challenge. However, one of the reasons that some would argue the potential of philanthropy as a unifying and galvanizing force in this space has yet to be realized relates to what has been a largely transactional approach to philanthropic engagement across the veterans community. In other words, a deficit of patient philanthropy positioned to generate sustainable momentum, predictable funding, and inclusive partnerships that catalyze broad public engagement.

In this regard, the patient philanthropy strategy enacted by the Schultz Family Foundation—supporting the design, development, and creation of the O2O program—serves as a compelling case study and lens through which to illustrate the potential of public-philanthropic partnerships.

PATIENT PHILANTHROPY IN PRACTICE: THE SCHULTZ FAMILY FOUNDATION & ONWARD TO OPPORTUNITY

O2O was envisioned as a vocational intervention, with an intentional focus toward leveraging broad-based partnerships, an innovative approach to engagement, and a purpose-built model designed to complement and extend the public sector’s efforts related to employment transition.

In 2014, the Schultz Family Foundation took steps to enact a vision to fundamentally transform the means and expectations associated with the employment transition experience for veterans and the military connected community. The vehicle for this transformation was an innovative transition initiative called Onward to Opportunity (O2O).

Formally launched in 2015, and created in partnership with the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University, the O2O program is the first national career training and placement program for the veteran and military spouse community that provides end-to-end support of the post-service employment journey. From the outset, O2O was envisioned as a vocational intervention, designed with an intentional focus toward leveraging broad-based partnership, an innovative approach to engagement, and a purpose-built model designed to complement and extend the public sector’s efforts related to employment transition.

Today, the O2O program is delivered in partnership with the Department of Defense (DOD), as an extension of the Department’s Transition Assistance Program (TAP). Currently operating on 18 military installations and communities—and also online—the O2O program combines industry-validated curricula, industry-specific training, professional certifications, coaching, and job placement services. The program leverages strong partnerships with leading veteran service organizations and private sector companies to prepare and match participants with their next career.

The O2O intervention was designed and is today delivered via an extraordinarily inclusive platform—a “big tent” approach that supports more than 800 partner firms, funders, and organizations representing a wide range of sectors, industries, and communities. Some of these partners include employers like JPMorgan Chase, Accenture, Prudential, Walmart, and USAA, as well as foundation funders such as the May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust who, alongside the Schultz Family Foundation, leverage their philanthropy to align key nonprofit partners (e.g., the USO, Hire Heroes USA, Wounded Warrior Project various content and curriculum partners, Blue Star Families, and others) to the effort.

Creating, evolving, and sustaining such a vision would not have been possible, given an approach to philanthropic engagement that was transactional. In this way, the O2O story represents a blueprint and vessel for similar investments positioned to catalyze public engagement, drive long-term impact, and motivate policy change in the veterans’ space.

The O2O intervention was designed as a “big tent” approach that supports more than 800 partner firms, funders, and organizations representing a wide range of sectors, industries, and communities.

Accordingly, in what follows, we outline the foundational dimensions of the O2O program in greater detail, illustrate the unique attributes applied to the programmatic approach to career preparation and transition, and detail current and future implications of the program for both the public and private sectors.

ONWARD TO OPPORTUNITY

Very simply, the objective of the O2O program is to facilitate the transition of military members from service to a private sector job and career. Accordingly, in designing the O2O program, the Schultz Family Foundation partnered with the IVMF, to introduce a pedagogical intervention positioned to support a life-cycle approach to career preparation, search, and placement. The O2O intervention is designed to function, on behalf of the learner, uniquely and alternatively as career counselor, instructor, mentor, human resource service center, and career placement pathway. Today, this multi-phase approach to training and employability supports participant access to specialized training and certification opportunities at a scale unprecedented in the context of military-to-employment transition programs.

Given the program’s aspirations related to scale—acknowledging that more than 200,000 service members transition each year—it was critical that the program design balance high-touch and customized solutions, with efficiencies and infrastructure that would support scalable service delivery. For this reason, the program was purposefully designed to include two options for learner engagement: (1) an in-residence model, operating on military installations across the globe, and (2) a distance learning model creating access for learners otherwise geographically separated from an in-residence operating location (model originally enabled by JPMorgan Chase & Co. as the Veterans Career Transition Program). This early planning assumption set the conditions for efficient and sustainable scaling over time. Consequently, today O2O offers the largest national footprint among the DOD approved Career Skills Programs, with operations on 18 military installations in the contiguous United States and Hawaii. And, more than 8,000 participants are enrolling annually, both online and on installations.²³



The O2O program was purposely designed to build upon the learner's existing stocks of knowledge, skills, and experiences through upskilling.

PHASE 1: LEARNER ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM PLACEMENT

The initial phase of the O2O program begins with a robust learner assessment designed to determine 'best programmatic fit.' The assessment tool—informed by research and validated by industry partners—is designed to aggregate key participant demographics, such as prior education and training experiences, military and non-military employment history, career aspirations, and learning pathway preferences.

Importantly, the intake assessment is a unique attribute of the O2O intervention, grounded in the underlying assumption that the military service experience confers valuable knowledge and labor-market relevant experiences and skills to the learner. Consequently, the O2O program was purposely designed to 'build from,' in upskilling fashion, the learner's existing stocks of knowledge, skills, and experiences. The purpose of the assessment is to illustrate knowledge and skill 'gaps' between existing learner competencies, and those required for the job and career, the learner aspires to, following service. In this way, not only does the assessment tool enable the IVMF enrollment services team to screen for program eligibility and create a personal relationship with the learner, but more importantly the pre-program assessment sets the conditions to align the participant's post-service aspirations, with those specific program resources most applicable to successfully realizing those aspirations.

PHASE 2: SKILLS DEVELOPMENT—ONWARD TO YOUR CAREER

Following learner assessment, each O2O participant is enrolled in a skills development module of training, titled Onward to Your Career (OTYC).

Offered to all in-classroom and distance learners, the OTYC curriculum is a complementary extension of the DOD's Transition GPS training. Specifically, the OTYC course builds from Transition GPS, by introducing supplementary coursework covering topics designed to prepare participants culturally for the civilian job market, and align industry and course choices to the participant's individualized training and career goals. This initial training phase also connects learners to materials and training content positioned to support networking and translate military-conferred skills to private sector career-search platforms such as LinkedIn, Indeed, ZipRecruiter, and others.

Maybe more importantly, the OTYC module of training was designed to introduce learners to subject matter experts representing a wide variety of industry sectors. The logic behind this approach is to support informed decision-making, related to the participant's career exploration and search process. These subject matter experts—sourced from the O2O program's industry partners across its footprint—engage learners related to their own career experiences, respond to questions about organizations, industries, firms, and markets, as well as provide information on civilian work and social culture that may be unfamiliar. This dimension of the OTYC course affords participants a unique opportunity to learn from and engage with peers and mentors on a personal level, adding additional depth to the already robust learning experience.

Finally, because the OTYC curriculum was purposefully designed to pair mentorship with skills development, the experience incorporates soft-skill development and interpersonal coaching, designed to assist the learner become more culturally competent related to the civilian world of work. Participants engage in a wide variety of activities including salary negotiations, and mock interviews, as well as trainings in dress etiquette, emotional intelligence, and differentiating types of corporate cultures. This strategy provides the participant with robust opportunities to improve skills and develop a keen understanding of the work environments that best position them for success.

PHASE 3: INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND ADVISING SERVICES

The third phase of the O2O program is focused on industry-specific skills training, situated in one of 32 industry-specific learning pathways. Learners are assigned to pathways that align with their individual, post-service career aspirations.

Importantly, each of the 32 learning pathways is linked to a labor-market connected credential or certification. These credentials and/or certifications are validated by the employer community, and as such represent vocational ‘currency’ for the veteran, at the time he or she begins the job search. Training pathways include project management, human resource management, cyber-security, information technology, and the customer experience—just to name a few. This expansive portfolio of learning pathways is motivated by the understanding that participants should be given broad opportunities to explore career pathways both related and unrelated to their military role and experience.

Throughout Phase 3 of the O2O program, each learner is assigned an academic advisor, a key differentiator and unique to the IVMF, who works close with the program participant to ensure they have the resources necessary to complete their coursework, and achieve the relevant credentials or certification. The advising team carries out necessary academic support functions by providing coursework reminders and one-on-one coaching via email and over the phone. Based on the needs of the participant, advisors also provide linkages to additional online study materials and unique resources in support of credentialing requirements.

PHASE 4: INDUSTRY RECOGNIZED CREDENTIALING

As detailed above, the O2O program leverages credentialing and certification opportunities as a means to assist participants increase their marketability in the civilian workforce. Often certification costs represent a major barrier for veterans seeking labor-market connected certifications; preparation programs supporting these certifications routinely cost \$2,000 - \$6,000 dollars on the open market, not including the exam fee. The O2O program eliminates those barriers, funding both the training and the cost of one credentialing exam for those who successfully complete the requirements associated with each learning pathway. Available certifications and credentials range from project management certifications such as Project Management Professional (PMP), Six Sigma Green Belt (SSGB), Professional in Human Resources (PHR), to information technology certifications such as SAS Certified Base Programmer, and numerous CompTIA certifications.

These certifications provide industry-recognized credentials for in-demand jobs that afford participants gainful and meaningful employment opportunities and outcomes. Certifications are a vital component of the O2O intervention as they complement participants’ robust military experience with industry-recognized credentials key to obtaining employment. Participants may take their certification exam before or after securing civilian employment, provided their supporting coursework has been completed.

The O2O program eliminates financial barriers, funding both the training and the cost of one credentialing exam for those who successfully complete the requirements associated with each learning pathway.

SELECTED LEARNING PATHWAYS

	BUSINESS MANAGEMENT Project Management: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PMP• CAPM• Six Sigma Green Belt Human Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• aPHR• PHR• SPHR Customer Service Excellence: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Call Center Fundamentals	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CompTIA A+• Security+• Cloud+• Linux+• Server+• Network+• SSCP• CISSP• CCENT• CCNA• ITIL• Java SE7 & SE8• Oracle 11G & 12C• SAS Base Programmer	
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PHASE 5: A PURPOSE-BUILT PATHWAY TO JOBS AND CAREERS

The primary objective of the O2O program is credentialing, jobs and careers. Central to this effort—and a unique dimension of the O2O intervention—is to build and engage a network of local, regional, and national employers seeking to tap in to the deep talent pool of the military connected population. This process is conducted through a coordinated and mutually-reinforcing partnership strategy.

While the primary purpose of the O2O employer network is a pathway to jobs for program participants—the network also represents a means to advance assessment and continuous improvement of the O2O curriculum.

By design, the O2O program's primary employment partner is Hire Heroes USA (HHUSA), a non-profit employment placement organization focused on the military connected community. HHUSA provides O2O participants with one-on-one career counseling and placement services—during and after training—to include resume support, interview skills, career coaching from industry professionals, and multiple methods for direct job placement. Specifically, via HHUSA, participants are assigned a Veteran Transition Specialist who works directly with the learner on personalized resume support and interview preparation. Further, on behalf of the participant, the HHUSA counselor works to match the participant with employment opportunities across HHUSA's network of over 800 regional and national employer partners. A unique dimension of the O2O program is to guarantee participants with multiple, post-training employment interviews. As the program continues to scale, various channel partners aligned with private sector opportunities are emerging and represent improved employment pathways unique to certain sectors of the economy (i.e. Cyber, IT).

Simultaneously, the O2O team supports the work of HHUSA programmatically, by way of efforts and events designed to increase the pool of employers leveraging the O2O talent pipeline. To this end, the O2O team is able to leverage the fact that the program is resident on 18 military installations, to host employer networking events designed to engage local and regional employers. Given that 60 percent of those who transition from service to civilian employment do so by way of a job at a small- to medium-sized business, this local employer engagement strategy powerfully complements HHUSA's.

While the primary purpose of the O2O employer network is a pathway to jobs for program participants, the network also represents a means to advance assessment and continuous improvement of the O2O curriculum. To that end, O2O employers are afforded the opportunity to provide input to the program design and curriculum, thereby informing both the quality and relevance of the intervention.

Selected O2O Employer Partners

O2O participants have access to over **800+** employer partners



JPMORGAN CHASE & Co.



accenture
High performance. Delivered.



verizon

amazon

LOCKHEED MARTIN

citibank

aetna

comcast

MCKESSON

WELLMED

CACI

LA QUINTA
INNS & SUITES

AT&T

WELLS
FARGO

USAA

KEY MEASURES & OUTCOMES

O2O serves a diverse range of participants; learners come to the program at different points on the employment continuum (unemployed, underemployed, employed), at different stages of their career (entry vs. mid vs. senior), aspiring to jobs in different industries, and from different geographic locations. Furthermore, even when participants appear similar based on circumstance or background, they often have vastly different career or employment goals or expectations of the O2O program. Serving this population fully and effectively is complex. Thus, measuring the success of that performance is equally complex and challenging.

Accordingly, O2O approaches outcome and impact measurement from several angles, and with a long-term, holistic perspective. Program measurement focuses on the IVMF and SFF's goal to enhance participants' long-term employability. For one participant, success may be completion of online training. For another, success may include certification, employment, or both. Others may even opt not to complete online training in order to capitalize on an emerging employment opportunity—a positive outcome nevertheless. These successes are always a part of the broader effort to arm participants with the long-term ability to continuously gain, retain and improve their employment.

In order to best serve the participants and understand the impact of the program, the O2O assessment routine was purposefully designed to capture program and participant data at key junctures in each learner's journey throughout program activities. The IVMF measurement and evaluation (M&E) team uses a combination of surveys and personal communications between participants and staff for data intake. Throughout this process, the team takes great effort to collect the full scope of data through all phases of the program to ultimately improve program delivery and efficiency. Importantly, these data trace training and employment outcomes back to the program, providing indication of success at individual and overall program levels.

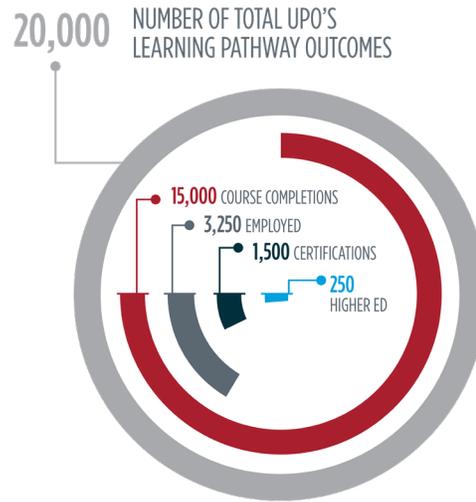
Program measurement starts with the intake form, an electronic survey distributed to participants through email upon completion of a program interest form. Information collected includes participant eligibility, learning pathway preference, participants' demographics, location, education, employment history, and programmatic goals. Program measurement continues during the second phase while the IVMF Advising team monitors participants' progress through the online learning management system and participant coursework.

Once the participants enter the third phase of the program, additional data is collected to determine if participants have completed their coursework, been connected with employer partners, interviewed for a position, taken a certification exam, received their certification, or have been hired into a new position. Each piece of data contributes to the formation of individualized narratives of O2O participants. These narratives empower O2O staff to continually help participants achieve their initial programmatic goals. The IVMF collaborates closely with Hire Heroes USA (HHUSA) to share data on participants and maintain accurate data in both organizations.

Because the O2O participant journey is individualized, the IVMF M&E team has developed a Universal Positive Outcome (UPO) measure, reflective of all possible aspects of participant success. This unique measure captures and communicates the broad impact of O2O across all participants and their distinctive needs. The suite of universal positive outcomes includes new hires, upskilling (promotion at an existing job, raise, or title change), entry into a higher education program, and certification. Participants can achieve several of these outcomes over the course of their participation in the program, but the IVMF counts only one outcome for the purposes of this rate calculation.

Program measurement focuses on the IVMF and SFF's goal to enhance participants' long-term employability.

As of October 2018, more than 16,000 participants have achieved a combined total of 20,000 UPOs through the O2O program—68 percent of the total enrolled participant population.²⁴



The true figure is likely even higher than this, considering the challenges faced in soliciting self-reported employment outcome data from participants. In addition to universal positive outcomes, the IVMF M&E team collects and monitors additional outcomes on retention and starting salary, participant demographics and intentions, and program process and efficiency measures. Of note, early O2O participants who have entered the workforce are reporting an 88 percent six-month retention rate and an average starting salary of \$62,000. The graphic below presents the primary outcomes associated with O2O learners as of October 2018, and Appendix A offers a full accounting of O2O’s primary outcome measures, definitions, and data sources.

O2O Impact (as of October 2018)

KEY OUTCOMES	
Employment Outcomes (<i>Employment and Enhanced Employment</i>)	11,000
Total Universal Positive Outcomes (<i>Employment, Higher Education, Certification, Upskilling, Course Completion</i>)	20,000 (16,000*)
Universal Positive Outcome Rate	68%
Six-Month Retention Rate	88%
Average (mean) Starting Salary	\$62,000

**Individual participants achieving at least one positive outcome*

This data allows the IVMF Enrollment Services team to understand participants on a deeper level, and properly guide them to the appropriate learning pathway and certificate coursework.

EVIDENCE BASED PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

The IVMF M&E team not only collects data to track participant outcomes, but utilizes the data to offer individualized advising to participants and make periodic programmatic changes. As mentioned above, participants must submit an initial intake assessment to be considered for the program. This data allows the IVMF Enrollment Services team to understand participants on a deeper level, and properly guide them to the appropriate learning pathway and certificate coursework. The majority of mid-program data assists the IVMF advising team in monitoring participants' progress through their online training materials, subsequently allowing the team to reach out and provide additional assistance where necessary. Additionally, these data inform the advising team as they help participants complete the program on time, and in line with their programmatic goals. The team then uses a combination of participant information to connect job-seeking participants with Hire Heroes USA to begin personalized resume support and job matching. Considering the scale at which O2O operates—averaging approximately 800 new participant enrollments per month over the past year—it is essential for the advising team to have access to data on participants' employment goals, progress through online training, and related information. This enables the advisors to accurately and efficiently provide additional support and services to select groups of participants based on their unique needs or goals. Distinctively, O2O consistently drives innovation in their participant support model through evidence based programmatic improvements.

In sum, the O2O intervention represents a purposeful, end-to-end assemblage of professional development and skills training resources, in 'sum of its parts fashion' along with career and skill-matching services. This multi-phase, multi-partner approach is mutually reinforcing, and unique within the greater landscape of U.S. workforce development programs.²⁵

Given the novelty of the O2O program, and the learnings accumulated to date since the program's inception, we conclude with findings relevant to both future program development initiatives in the transition context, and also implications for policy.

THE O2O APPROACH: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The O2O program was created to leverage innovative partnerships and approaches to learning, and in this way facilitate a seamless transition from military service to the civilian world of work.

DOD's Transition to Veterans Program Office notes that the all-volunteer force is sustained only when service members thrive in their civilian lives, showing fellow civilians and those interested in joining the military that veterans can indeed live healthy, productive, and long post-service lives.²⁶ Accordingly, not only is preparing service members for the transition to civilian life central to our national defense, it is also the moral obligation for all of American society.

To that end, the O2O program was created to leverage innovative partnerships and approaches to learning, and in this way facilitate a seamless transition from military service to the civilian world of work. Importantly, the O2O program represents a departure from the status quo, in the context of existing public and private sector efforts focused toward advancing the employment situation of veterans. For that reason, the design, development, and ongoing evolution of the O2O program suggest prescriptions for both policy and practice related to the employment transition of military-connected individuals and families.

FINDINGS: PARTNERSHIP AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

1. ADAPTATION TO CHANGING AMERICAN WORKFORCE

O2O was founded on the belief that skill-acquisition, learning, and professional development are essential not simply as a means to secure employment in the civilian sector at the time of transition from the military, but also to remain employable and therefore thrive, throughout one's post-service career.

Given the dynamic and ever-shifting economic landscape, skill relevance and obsolescence represents a significant barrier to both short- and long-term employability. To that end, the design of the O2O model informed a growing body of research focused on workforce development as situated in an economic environment where change is assumed constant. The central findings stemming from that research suggest that the most impactful workforce initiatives are those that incorporate and embrace the following assumptions and imperatives:

- Initial and ongoing learner assessment is central to an effective and efficient intervention.
- Incorporating both current and future (anticipated) market conditions into planning assumptions and offerings supports long-term employability of the learner, and long-term sustainability of the initiative.
- Objectives related to both scale and impact are supported by infrastructure decisions that allow for flexibility of training options over time.

- “The Employer Knows Best”—that is, a focus on training and certifications validated and ‘in-demand’ by the employer community, best serve the learner and also legitimize the training intervention.

Given the above, O2O program managers annually conduct a curriculum gap analysis, in order to assess course offerings and industry alignment, based on U.S. Department of Labor data descriptive of emerging industries and occupations. A similar semi-annual review, in partnership with employer partners, is conducted for the purpose of updating and incorporating private-sector practices supporting cultural preparedness for the civilian workforce.

In addition, the O2O learning infrastructure was created in a way that allows program managers to continually adapt training offerings, in a way that is efficient and expeditious. For example, O2O currently offers more than 32 learning pathways in Information Technology (IT) and Business Management (BM) including project management, information networking, information security, programming, and human resources. However, as new certification are introduced by industry—or the demand for existing certifications shifts—the common learning platform model affords the O2O team the opportunity to quickly and efficiently add new certifications, or stand down those in less demand. For example, given increasing demand for workers in project management²⁷ and data science careers,²⁸ earlier this year the O2O team added to the curriculum the SAS Base Programmer Certification through the SAS 1 and 2 coursework, and the Project Management coursework by adding the Agile Certified Practitioner certification. In 2018, O2O will add two new career tracks, Skilled Trades being one, along with as many as eight new course pathways: expanded cyber curriculum, international software testing, hospitality and tourism, automotive service excellence, supply chain management, pharmacy technician, and sales. In summary, the flexibility of the O2O infrastructure, allows for rapid and efficient adaptation and alignment with labor market conditions.

Based on lessons learned from the O2O initiative, it’s apparent that programmatic interventions focused on enabling a successful employment transition (whether inside or outside of government) must acknowledge and embrace the dynamic nature of the marketplace for human capital and talent. In practice, this means that for both efficiency and effectiveness objectives to be realized, current and future (anticipated) market conditions must be incorporated into initial and ongoing planning assumptions. Further, investments in program infrastructure should anticipate that the number and nature of training options will evolve over time. In this regard, placement and partnership goals are best served via close and ongoing collaborations with the employer community, positioned to a) validate and legitimize the scale and scope of the current training intervention, and b) inform the return on investment likely to stem from contemplated changes to the scale and scope of the current training intervention (i.e. eliminating a learning pathway, adding a learning pathway, etc.).

2. TAILORED ADVISEMENT & CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS ENHANCE SERVICE DELIVERY

The experience of the O2O program validates complementary research with regard to the co-occurrence of need often characteristic of transitioning service members and veterans. In other words, transitioning service members, veterans, and spouses do not often experience employment challenges in isolation, but instead experience co-occurring challenges that impact their ability to successfully complete coursework, endure a job search, or relocate once they have secured employment. Acknowledging this reality, the O2O program offers a unique and innovative strategy distinctive to the landscape of veteran-serving organizations (VSOs), including IVMF itself, and Career Skills Programs (CSPs) programs, currently serving the employment situation of service members, veterans, and military-connected family

Placement and partnership goals are best served via close and ongoing collaborations with the employer community, positioned to a) validate and legitimize the scale and scope of the current training intervention, and b) inform the return on investment likely to stem from contemplated changes to the scale and scope of the current training intervention.

members. This strategy is based on incorporating a tailored and individualized approach to the advisement of participants, alongside a “big tent” service delivery model that incorporates specialized stakeholders and organizations into the training intervention.

Specifically, the O2O intervention employs a multifunctional team of ‘nested’ Installation Managers and Coordinators, working with advisors and employment counselors, equipped to provide program participants individualized enrollment, advising, assistance, navigation, and other services throughout the lifecycle of their engagement with the program. This team is comprised of subject matter experts, equipped to provide guidance to program participants both related to the training intervention, and also with regard to addressing co-occurring barriers to program completion. A major learning associated with the O2O program stems from the recognition that if the program team is not equipped to address the full range of potential barriers to training completion, the effectiveness and efficiency of the intervention is significantly reduced. At the same time, it is not resource efficient to build complementary program infrastructure positioned to address the full range of co-occurring needs. Accordingly, the O2O design approach is to embrace partnership at scale.

The most resource efficient means to address participant co-occurrence of needs is by way of strategic partnership with issue-specific experts and social service providers.

The O2O program leverages trusted partnerships with the public sector including the Department of Defense at a national level through the U.S. Army Installation Management Command, while also leveraging national and local partners to provide supportive services and resources to program participants—all positioned to mitigate barriers to program completion, and ultimately enhance employment-related outcomes. Currently a network of more than 800 program partners engage with the O2O team, to support participant needs that range from social services, education, and housing. The implications of this approach for O2O program completion has been profound; a program completion rate that exceeds 60 percent, which is unprecedented in the context of workforce development programs across the U.S.

Programs designed to advance the employment situation of military-connected individuals and families must build and plan the intervention to incorporate mechanisms positioned to address needs outside and ‘beyond’ the employment situation. In the absence of such mechanisms, the efficiency and effectiveness of employment-focused interventions will be significantly mitigated. Importantly, needs outside the employment situation (co-occurrence) will only be identified as a function of robust learner assessment, and individualized learner engagement (advisement). The O2O experience highlights how and why the most resource efficient means to address participant co-occurrence is by way of strategic partnership with issue-specific experts and social service providers. From a pedagogical lens—acknowledging co-occurrence to be potentially disruptive to the employment-specific intervention—it is imperative that service-delivery partnerships are integrated into the participant experience in concurrent fashion, so that learners remain engaged with their journey from military service to civilian jobs and careers.

3. ACCESS AND SCALE

A purposeful and concurrent focus on access and scale differentiates the O2O program from others operating under the DOD SkillBridge authority. In just three years, almost 20,000 service members, veterans, and military spouses in all 50 states and abroad have been skilled, with over 11,000 of these going on to new jobs or an enhanced role with their current employer.²⁹ The rapid and efficient scale realized by O2O, stems from prioritizing access as a central consideration related to program design and resourcing.

- a. The program design facilitates access as a function of multiple pathways of learner engagement; specifically, (1) an in-person model, operating on military installations, and (2) a distance learning model, positioned to engage learners anytime, and in any location.

- b. The program design facilitates access as a function of its reach beyond active duty service members and veterans, to be inclusive of military spouses and the National Guard and Reserve communities. For members of the Guard and Reserve, and also among military spouses, underemployment remains a significant challenge.³⁰ Potential barriers faced by Guard and Reserve and military spouses include frequent relocations, childcare responsibilities, remoteness of location, demanding training schedules, low transferability of occupational licenses, and more.³¹
- c. The program design facilitates access as a function prioritizing expansion to military-connected communities, where a single infrastructure investment can impact military members and families connected to multiple and otherwise disparate military installations. The O2O investment in Naval Station Norfolk is an example of such an investment. Today, called the Hampton Roads O2O, the O2O team at Naval Station Norfolk draws program participants not just from NAS, but also from the eight surrounding military installations.

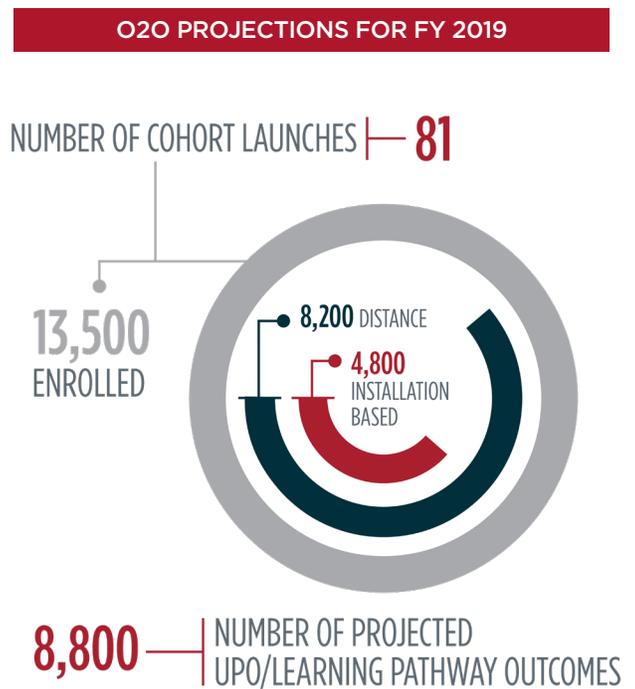
Acknowledging the many and varied obstacles impacting the ability of military-connected individuals to engage transition-support programs, purposeful programmatic design that allows for broad access is best positioned to support efficient and rapid scale. In a similar vein, these design considerations go beyond platform, infrastructure, and pedagogical dimensions, to include program eligibility considerations. The extent to which program eligibility can be extended in ways inclusive of military spouses and members of the National Guard and the Reserves not only supports efficient and rapid scale, but this level of access also represents an approach that acknowledges the inter-connectedness of various military-connected communities who together sustain the all-volunteer force.

FINDINGS: MILITARY TRANSITION & POLICY

1. COST SAVINGS AND AVOIDANCE

The economic costs of war are significantly larger than the budgetary costs, in part due to large externality costs, from disability compensation to hunger and homelessness.³² From 2010-2012, unemployment rates for veterans were at their highest in decades. At that time, the DOD was seeing record-high numbers of veteran applications for unemployment insurance (UCX)—around 90,000 new applicants per year over that period. This cost around \$1 billion annually, while the United States was still recovering from the 2008 Great Recession. But, even as the economy has regained its strength since 2010, \$5.1 billion was spent on UCX benefits for veterans across the country from 2010-2016, with almost 30,000 veterans still unemployed and applying for benefits in 2016. Unfortunately, the issues veterans experienced during the Great Recession still follow them today.

From 2014-2016, almost 1.5 million veterans received benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), over five percent of all SNAP recipients. Of these veterans, 34 percent were below the poverty line, and many veteran recipients were above the median age of 55 years.³³ These veterans were in the military during an all-volunteer force before the Vietnam draft, but clearly still face a set of challenges with transition, particularly since there was no transition assistance available until TAP's formation in 1991. Additionally, the current Administration's proposed FY 2018 budget



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sought to allocate \$543 million towards tackling veteran homelessness through the HUD-VASH voucher program, an increase of \$47 million from 2017.³⁴

The potential consequences veterans face over time—poverty, hunger, homelessness, and unemployment—can be mitigated through education, training, and emphasis on lifelong learning and employment.³⁵ Programs like O2O which invest in technical and business skill-building ultimately help veterans and their families be more marketable to organizations in the civilian economy and more likely to secure a job, both now and in the future. This approach has the potential to reduce veteran unemployment (saving up to \$5 million in UCX),³⁶ veteran homelessness (39,471 homeless veterans in 2016),³⁷ and food insecurity (8% of all veterans are enrolled in SNAP). These cost savings could allow government agencies to prioritize future funding towards transitioning service member and veteran training, resilience, and innovations in health care.

2. ACCESS TO HIGH-SKILLED TALENT & TAXPAYER INVESTMENT IN HUMAN CAPITAL

Programs like O2O which invest in technical and business skill-building ultimately help veterans and their families be more marketable to organizations in the civilian economy and more likely to secure a job, both now and in the future.

As noted above, the U.S. military is the nation's largest single workforce development institution. In 2007, the RAND Corporation released a study estimating the underlying average costs of a "military-person year." In accounting for just the non-compensation costs, which include outlays for training, education, and related personnel support and operational costs, the average annual taxpayer investment in training and developing a service member was \$67,787 per active duty service member—before compensation and benefits.³⁸ Using this now dated statistic to extrapolate further, consider, for example, that each service member transitioning out of the military with at least 5-8 years or more of service, conservatively represents a human capital investment of \$350,000-\$500,000, and in some cases, much higher. Ensuring that service members realize a successful transition to civilian employment is not only a moral and ethical imperative, its simply sound government and stewardship of the nation's investment in those who served.

In addition, by the time transitioning service members separate from the military, they will have held responsibility for physical equipment worth millions, navigated through a complex bureaucracy, and been accountable for the lives of their fellow service members. These experiences, coupled with the interpersonal, communication, management, and leadership skills developed and refined in the military, are exactly the types of pursuits and endeavors which businesses and private organizations look for when recruiting and building their workforce.³⁹

Service members, veterans, and their spouses already have tremendous skills in leadership, decision-making, discipline, and teambuilding—all skills which cannot be readily taught in university or college settings.⁴⁰ Programs like O2O build off this accelerated skills platform and helps participants realize their career tomorrow, five years, and ten years out by providing expert instruction in the industry areas and skills which are most in-demand. Through engaging with personal career advisors, transitioning service members, veterans, and spouses can create portfolios and plans that help them realize their individualized goals for success in the years to come. Over 16,000 O2O participants have been skilled since program inception, with over 11,000 gaining new or enhancing their employment, many with O2O-participating organizations.

Participating as an employer partner in O2O confers to the nation's employers the opportunity to engage one-on-one with O2O graduates in recruiting environments, enabling them to attract the highest quality of talent to their organization. In addition, government agencies, particularly those at the federal level, have a unique opportunity to recruit, hire, and retain veterans with skill sets and backgrounds that are needed to make federal government operations run more cost-effectively and efficiently.

In FY 2015 alone, 102,628 veterans were hired by federal agencies throughout the country.⁴¹ While Departments of Defense and Homeland Security urgently need new talent in cybersecurity, data analytics, and information technology, other federal, state, and local agencies need veterans who have project and "business" management experience.⁴² O2O can serve as a valuable pipeline for agencies at the local, state, and federal levels as they seek new talent to combat the challenges government faces today and in the future.

3. ALIGNING THE DOD SKILLBRIDGE AUTHORITY WITH THE FUTURE WORKPLACE

In a 2017 report, the International Labor Organization noted that technological advances are emerging "at an unprecedented rate," and thereby changing the nature of work in the United States and abroad.⁴³ It follows that investing in human capital with a long-term horizon not only affords participants the skill development necessary to get a new job or a promotion, but their increased marketability and employability avert future unemployment, homelessness, poverty, and incarceration.⁴⁴ Programs like O2O truly help set transitioning service members, veterans, and their spouses on paths to success well into the future.

In contrast, an overly narrow focus on transitioning service members' rapid attainment of their first, post-military job risks overlooking several key factors—particularly job quality and security—that can negatively affect transition and their long-term employability as well as personal and family well-being. By the time military-connected job seekers find themselves in a situation of unemployment or underemployment, it is most often beyond the reach of logical intervention by the majority of DOD and other public and privately led transition programs and services. A critical piece to prevent and protect military-connected job seekers against these scenarios is to ensure that they are also prepared for the workplace of tomorrow and presented opportunities that best align with where high quality jobs will be, both today and the foreseeable future.

DOD, DOL, and other federal partners as appropriate, should periodically assess existing civilian skills training programs operating under the SkillBridge authority as they relate to current and projected U.S. workforce needs and trends. Among other elements, this assessment should include a gap analysis that maps current SkillBridge offerings, volume of utilization, and performance outcomes against high growth industries and occupations, projected over the next decade. In turn, the DOD should utilize the findings of such an assessment to foster collaboration with the private and philanthropic sectors to develop and continuously improve, workforce training programs that complement DOD-TAP, while at the same time, evolve alongside the rapidly changing U.S. workforce demand.

Ensuring that service members make a successful transition to civilian employment is not only a moral and ethical imperative, it's simply sound government and stewardship of the nation's investment in those who served.



ONWARD
TO
OPPORTUNITY

CONCLUSION

Our post-9/11 wars represent the longest sustained period of military conflict in the nation's history, and also the first extended test of the all-volunteer force. Importantly, the assumption most central to sustaining the all-volunteer force is the proposition that military service will create and accelerate pathways to civilian jobs and careers. Unfortunately today, many veterans continue to struggle to find work at rates comparable to their civilian peers.

In 2014, the Schultz Family Foundation—in partnership with the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University—took steps to fundamentally transform the means and expectations associated with the employment transition experience for veterans, by creating the Onward to Opportunity program. In just a few short years, the O2O program has grown in scale and scope such that today, it represents the largest national footprint among the DOD approved Career Skills Programs—more than 11,000 military connected participants into post-service jobs or enhancing their employment situations, and supported thousands more to higher-education and vocational training. Consequently, given that the public sector will continue to rely on the private sector for support, engagement, and innovation in support of the employment transition, the O2O experience suggests a blueprint for effective and efficient partnerships between the public sector and private philanthropy, and more broadly for a whole-of-society approach to empowering veterans and families to navigate the often challenging transition from military to civilian life.

LaKerra Sumter-McCaskil
Tri-Base Jacksonville, Florida

APPENDIX A.

EXECUTIVE TALKING POINTS

In 2014, the Schultz Family Foundation took steps to enact a vision to fundamentally transform the means and expectations associated with the employment transition experience for veterans and the military connected community.

- The challenges facing veterans and their families, when navigating the transition from military to civilian life, are often varied and complex.
- One of the primary concerns expressed by those families making this transition relates to the means and pathways appropriate to secure post-service employment, concurrent with the transition process.
- Unfortunately today, despite generally low rates of unemployment across the U.S., some veterans continue to struggle to find work at rates comparable to their civilian peers.
- Consequently, after directly observing the plight of military families struggling to successfully transition away from military service at a time of prolonged war, in 2014 the Schultz Family Foundation took steps to enact a vision to fundamentally transform the means and expectations associated with the employment transition experience for veterans.
- The goal was simple: to boldly and forever change the very nature of military transition by directly connecting the private sector and its meaningful employment opportunities before actual separation from military service itself.
- The vehicle for this transformation is an innovative transition initiative called Onward to Opportunity (O2O).
- The O2O program is a first-of-its-kind initiative, built to support the life-cycle of career preparation, search, and placement, by way of helpful tools, resources, and specialized skills training. This integrated approach supports military transitioning into civilian work by way of specialized training and certification opportunities representing 32 learning pathways, and a network of more than 800 post-training employers.
- Today, the O2O program represents the largest national footprint among the DOD approved Career Skills Programs, with operations on 18 military installations in the contiguous United States and Hawaii. And, more than 8,000 participants are enrolling annually—both on installation and online.
- Since the program's inception in 2015, O2O has assisted more than 11,000 transitioning service members, veterans, and military spouses with post-service jobs and/or enhancing their employment situations, and has supported thousands more to higher-education and vocational training.

- Why does this matter?
 - The inability to secure meaningful post-service employment—particularly at the time of transition—has been demonstrated by research to have potentially devastating implications for the veteran, and his or her family.
 - For example, unemployment or underemployment at the time of transition undermines the long-term financial health of the family unit, contributes to marginalized health outcomes, and has even been linked to an increased rate of suicidal ideation among veterans.
 - Importantly, these costs and consequences also extend to society.
 - Current projections related to the costs associated with veteran’s benefits—to include unemployment compensation—are projected to shortly exceed \$1 trillion.
- Given these high stakes, over the past 17 years of war, the public sector has relied on the private sector for support, engagement, and innovation positioned to support a successful employment transition for those who have shouldered the burden of the nation’s defense.
- The O2O case serves as a blueprint for efforts to catalyze public engagement, drive long-term impact, and motivate policy change related to whole-of-society engagement in support of transitioning service members, veterans, and their families navigate, the often challenging transition from military to civilian life.

APPENDIX B.

O2O OUTCOME METRICS AND DEFINITIONS

Program Metrics and Definitions

TRAINING OUTCOMES		
<i>Label</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Data Source</i>
Skilled	Completed OTYC curriculum	IVMF staff data entry
Completed Online	Completed online training track	Skillssoft report, IVMF staff data entry

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES		
<i>Label</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Data Source</i>
Employed	Received a job	Direct comm. with participant (IVMF/HHUSA), survey responses
Entered Employment Rate (EER)	% of job-seeking participants who complete online training and are hired	Calculation based on Employed & Online Completion data
Upskill (confirmed)	Had a job and received a promotion, raise, or title change	Direct comm. with participant (IVMF/HHUSA), survey responses
Enhanced Employment	Came to program with a job, completed online training	Direct comm. with participant (IVMF/HHUSA), survey responses

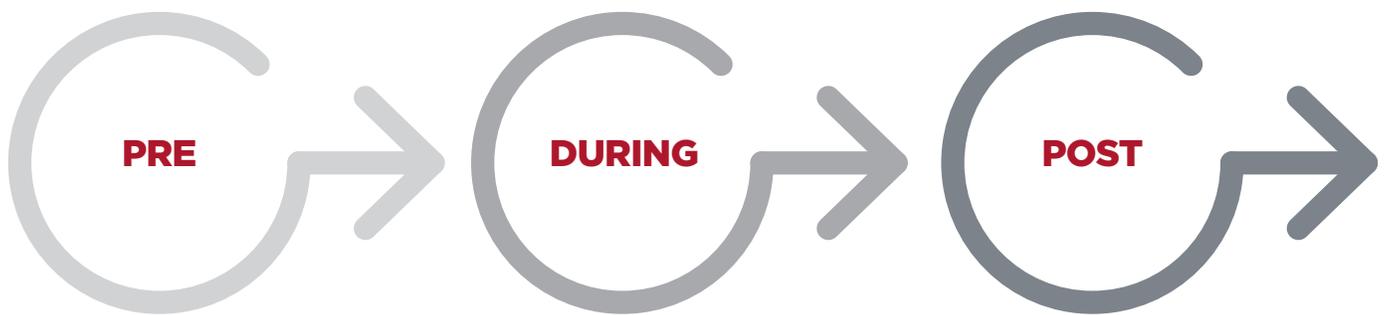
OTHER GLOBAL OUTCOMES AND METRICS		
<i>Label</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Data Source</i>
Universal Positive Outcome Rate	Rate used to communicate the full scope of positive outcomes participants can achieve: Employment, Upskilling, Entry into Higher Ed, Certification, Course Completion	Calculation based on outcome data (participant-reported via staff/survey) & course completion data (from learning management software) *Only 1 outcome per participant is counted
Assessed	Submitted an intake assessment	Qualtrics submission data

APPENDIX C.

O2O MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION APPROACH

In order to effectively communicate programmatic success, it is necessary to understand who our participants are, their training goals and career aspirations, and how the O2O intervention meets those needs. The data collection efforts described below allow for effective coaching of participants through the program, referral to partner organizations, and measurement of post-program outcomes.

The following is a system overview of the evaluation effort of the participant life cycle through O2O.



WHAT WE MEASURE

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demographics• Career & Training Goals• Program Preferences• Military Service History | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning Progress• Course Completion• Employment Goals | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employment• Higher Education• Certification• Job Retention |
|---|--|---|

.....

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does our pool of participants look like?• What are in-demand career tracks among participants? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How are participants progressing through the program?• How can we best coach participants to completion? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are participant outcomes?• What does participant success look like? |
|--|---|---|

ENDNOTES

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