FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT

Implementation Assessment of Executive Order 13518– The Veterans Employment Initiative

By the Institute for Veterans and Military Families

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U.S. Office of Personnel Management

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Preface

Various forms of preferential hiring of military veterans in the U.S. government date back to the Civil War. The most recent initiative, specified under Executive Order (EO) 13518 and signed by President Barack Obama November 9, 2009, represents the most comprehensive effort in U.S. history to improve federal employment opportunities for veterans. The order established the Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI), a comprehensive program to improve government-wide recruiting, use of applicable hiring authorities, and retention of veteran employees across federal departments and agencies.

This report documents the results of a yearlong, independent study to assess the policy implementation of the government's Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI). The study considers the initiative's efficacy and impact; identifies successful practices, implementation strategies, and opportunities for improvement; and offers recommendations to senior policymakers and agency leaders on how best to position the initiative for future success.

The study follows a multi-method research design involving analysis of government records, federal employment data, in-depth interviews with senior government officials, and targeted surveys of key human resource leaders and front-line hiring managers. The findings and recommendations offer ways that the current administration, the Council on Veterans Employment, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, and federal human resources professionals might guide future policy and actions that would advance veteran employment opportunities in the federal government.

This research was led independently by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University, without funding, in collaboration with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. Contirbuting research team members of this report include the following: Nicholas J. Armstrong, Ph.D., Zachary S. Huitink, Ph.D., Matthew A. Hidek, Ph.D., Rosalinda Maury, M.S., Rachel Lisner Uveges, M.S., Nathaniel Birnbaum, B.A., and Fitore Hyseni, M.P.A.

Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government

By the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 301 of title 3 of the United States Code, I hereby order as follows:

Section 1. Policy. Veterans have served and sacrificed in defense of our Nation. When they complete their service, we must do everything in our power to assist them in re-entering civilian life and finding employment. Government as well as private employers should play a prominent role in helping veterans who may be struggling to find jobs. As one of the Nation's leading employers, the Federal Government is in need of highly skilled individuals to meet agency staffing needs and to support mission objectives. Our veterans, who have benefited from training and development during their military service, possess a wide variety of skills and experiences, as well as the motivation for public service, that will help fulfill Federal agencies' staffing needs. It is therefore the policy of my Administration to enhance recruitment of and promote employment opportunities for veterans within the executive branch, consistent with merit system principles and veterans' preferences prescribed by law. The Federal Government will thereby help lead by example in promoting veterans' employment.

BARACK OBAMA
THE WHITE HOUSE,
November 9, 2009.

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Various forms of preferential hiring of military veterans in the U.S. government date back to the Civil War. The most recent initiative, specified under Executive Order (EO) 13518 and signed by President Barack Obama on November 9, 2009, represents one of the most comprehensive effort in U.S. history to improve federal employment opportunities for veterans. The order established the Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI), a comprehensive program to improve government-wide recruiting, use of applicable hiring authorities, and retention of veteran employees across federal departments and agencies.

This report documents the results of a yearlong, independent study to assess the policy implementation of the government's Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI). The study considers the initiative's efficacy and impact, identifies successful practices, strategies and opportunities for improvement. This assessment also offers recommendations to senior policymakers and agency leaders on how to best position the VEI for future success.

The study follows a multi-method research design involving analysis of government records, federal employment data, in-depth interviews with senior government officials, and targeted surveys of key human resource leaders, and front-line hiring managers. The findings and recommendations offer ways that the current administration, the Council on Veterans Employment, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, and federal human resources professionals might guide future policy and actions that would advance veteran employment opportunities in the federal government.

> Recognizing the "prominent role" of government as "one of the Nation's leading employers" alongside private industry, the order charged the federal government with helping "to lead by example in promoting veterans' employment" (Executive Order No. 13518, 2009, p. 58533). The order acknowledges the federal government's mission-critical staffing need for "highly skilled individuals," of which veterans represent a ready-made talent pool, given their training, development, skills, experiences, and public service motivation (Executive Order No. 13518, 2009).
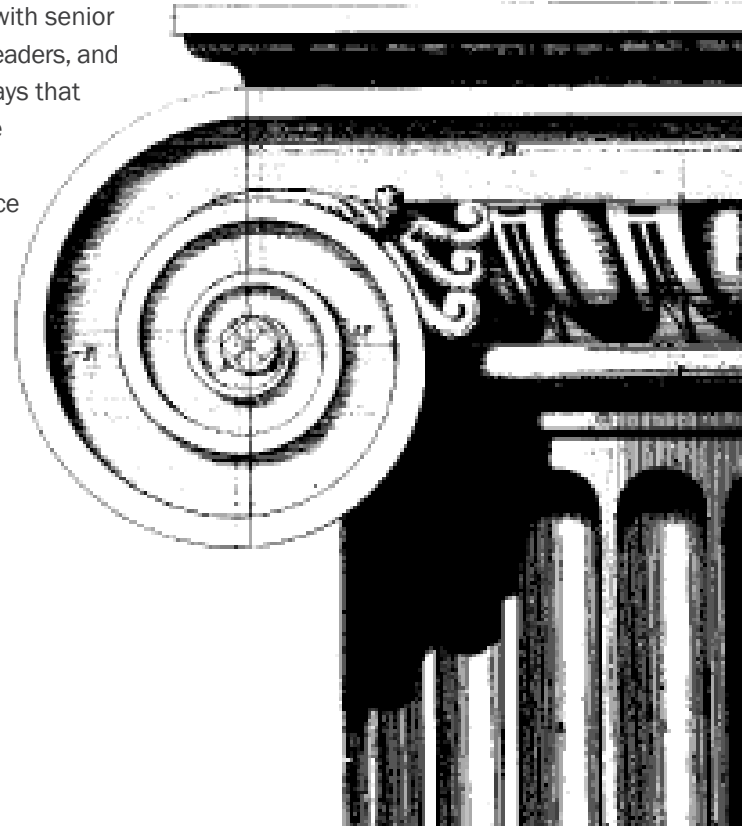
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Findings from our assessment of the VEI reveal mainly positive outcomes for the federal government, as a whole, during the period examined. Veteran employment in the federal sector has risen sharply since the VEI's inception in 2009. To an extent, this can be attributed to the VEI initiative and its strong initial leadership. However, a deeper, agency-level examination of employment data, considered alongside primary data from two targeted surveys and select interviews of key insiders, agency Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), and hiring managers, show more mixed performance in hiring, retention, and program implementation. There remains clear opportunity for improvement and increased inter-agency learning to sustain, if not enhance, the gains made since 2009. There is also widely expressed need to both simplify and further educate the broader workforce on rules and authorities pertaining to veteran hiring.

NEED FOR SUSTAINED POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: The VEI is governed by a Council on Veterans Employment, an interagency body comprised of the federal government's 24 largest departments and agencies. At its outset, the Council on Veterans Employment and the steering committee provided the initiative with strong, committed leadership required for implementing a program of such large scale and scope. Over time, however, progress and momentum toward achieving VEI goals waned due to inconsistent participation by senior-level officials.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT: In response to requirements in E.O 13518, OPM and the council instituted a government-wide performance measurement system. The system progressed from an initial emphasis on improving the number of veterans hired by each agency to a broader focus on employment concerns such as onboarding and metrics. In grouping agencies by size, the system also provided needed adjustments for agency differences in size, resources, and other factors that could bear on employment outcomes. Additional analysis and measurement design is needed to develop an integrated performance management system that integrates VEI strategic planning with a more comprehensive picture of agency-level progress on veteran employment goals (e.g., onboarding, retention, performance, and satisfaction).

INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION: The VEI facilitated existing cross-agency collaboration, particularly on veteran hiring and recruiting, and presents valuable opportunities to institutionalize informal collaborative efforts identified during the initiative's implementation. Despite much progress, more than half of chief human capital officers responding to our survey expressed that their agencies had found it at least somewhat difficult to collaborate under the VEI, highlighting the need for additional attention to this policy objective.

STAKEHOLDER INFORMATION SHARING AND DATA ANALYSIS: The Feds Hire Vets website provides a single source of information on hiring preference, the federal job application process, training, and associated resources to assist veterans, transitioning service members, their families, federal HR professionals, and hiring managers. In general, the federal government has been successful in providing a high level of e-government services. The collaborative nature of these systems provides new means of collaboration and engagement that were cost-prohibitive in the past. If feasible within budgetary constraints, designing and building technology platforms that support the VEI will serve as a valuable tool to further policy objectives.

AGENCY-LEVEL PERCEPTIONS OF THE VEI AND VETERANS EMPLOYMENT: Agencies perceived the VEI and the broader push to bolster veterans' employment with mixed views. They generally embraced the idea and the value of employing veterans but cited concerns including impacts on workforce diversity, conflict with other hiring priorities, and whether veterans could perform (or would even be attracted to) civilian roles and missions seen as unrelated to the military. OPM, in cooperation with the Council and agency heads, should formally address these concerns, as they are critical to the future trajectory of the VEI.

AGENCY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VEI: Implementation of the VEI proved strongest among large departments and agencies with more resources and a strong cultural affinity for hiring veterans—such as the departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security, and Labor. Smaller agencies with more specialized missions experienced greater difficulties. Upon close examination, Veterans Employment Program Offices (VEPOs)—offices that serve as a centerpiece of the VEI by coordinating human resource activities—show differences with program implementation. In general, large agencies maintain dedicated staffing and focus but smaller ones struggling to commit full-time resources.

CHALLENGES WITH VETERAN EMPLOYMENT POLICIES: While the VEI does not specifically address veterans preference and the broader set of authorities pertaining to hiring veterans, interviewees and survey respondents—from senior political appointees and agency Chief Human Capital Officers to hiring managers and individual veteran employees—expressed widespread dissatisfaction with the existing hiring rules, difficulty understanding and implementing the rules, and needs for change in policy.

VETERAN SKILL ALIGNMENT: The Council and Steering Committee identified the transferability of military-acquired skills to federal employment requirements as a top priority for the VEI. Addressing these concerns was a dominant theme expressed by the interviewees. The inherent complexity of this process, in practice, was a short-term impediment to the design and implementation of a formal process to address this need.

PRIVATE-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT: Drawing lessons learned from successful private-sector veteran hiring initiatives is an important component of strategic planning for the VEI. Public-private partnerships between federal agencies and the private sector have been successfully implemented through programs that address issues of social concern, providing strong precedent for cooperative relationships between the business community and federal agencies. Establishing continued access to hiring and career development opportunities is essential for the future of the VEI.

CIVILIAN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION: Existing research on civilian workforce development for veterans is not comprehensive. Expanding this component of the VEI will require additional research to examine the most effective way to harness cross-sector cooperation and share input over the specific objectives to be pursued.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL ON VETERANS EMPLOYMENT

1 Provide dedicated and sustained leadership to ensure that agency representatives possess the necessary authority to remain engaged with the goals and objectives identified by the Council. Establish and maintain political support at the highest level possible—preferably the vice president. Designate an executive director to support the administrative management and supervision of the council's activities.

2 In consultation with OPM and the Council, direct and oversee the development of a coordinated strategic planning process to address the findings and lessons learned that emerged from the implementation assessment. Provide agency leaders with the resources and expertise needed to research, design, and implement an improved performance measurement system throughout the 24 agencies participating in the VEI.

3 To advance the strategic aims of the VEI, establish a formal outreach process with veteran employment coalitions such as the Department of Defense's (DoD) Hiring Heroes Program, DoD Operation Warfighter, and the private sector's Hiring Our Heroes and the Veteran Jobs Mission initiatives. In consultation with OPM and the DoD, expand the DoD SkillBridge initiative to enable federal agencies to participate as employers. Provide training and internships to transitioning service members and take action to ensure that federal agencies participate in the initiative. Extract and apply lessons learned from the implementation assessment to determine how other federal initiatives (such as Transition GPS, DOL VETS, the DoD Hiring Heroes Program, and the VA's economic communities initiative, vocational rehabilitation, and employment programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OPM AND HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS

1 In cooperation with the Council, OPM, and agency and department heads, consult with experts in the fields of industrial and organizational psychology, public management, and veteran-focused social science research to develop a strategic planning framework to achieve desired agency outcomes through innovation, learning, and workforce intelligence. Continue to align and enhance the hiring, onboarding, and retention of veterans in accordance with the strategic planning process.

2 Develop a comprehensive plan to identify the most effective means to translate the military-acquired skills, education, and competencies of veterans for civilian employment. Consult with vocational counselors, educational specialists, and human resources managers to provide employment pathways for transitioning service members and veterans. Address gaps with skills and education through military transition and federal career development programs.

3 Design a tailored, data-driven performance management system to guide goal setting, action steps, and resource allocation for the next phase of the VEI. Connect the development of metrics and reporting procedures with organizational learning outcomes and VEI objectives developed through the strategic planning process. Measure performance against the entire employment picture (e.g., performance, job satisfaction, civil service tenure), not merely through statistics based on hiring, onboarding, and retention. If feasible within budgetary constraints, develop an information technology system for use by OPM and agency Veteran Employment Program Offices to support data analysis and reporting requirements.

◯ Conduct a targeted assessment to determine how human resource professionals can address differing views related to civil-military culture within the workforce and how gaps in understanding and opinions may be impacting perceptions of fairness, diversity, and inclusion. Reflecting a general trend within previous research findings, interviews with chief human capital officers reveal significant differences in views regarding hiring preference, special hiring authorities, and employment advantages for veterans. Data gathered from a survey of federal employees also reinforces this finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AGENCY AND DEPARTMENT HEADS

◯ Identify key occupations, skills, licenses, and professional certifications that support agency-specific workforce needs and align them with established career skills programs and other established workforce readiness initiatives for transitioning military and veterans. Provide job training opportunities and internships in cooperation with Council initiatives, DoD SkillBridge, DOL VETS, the VA Vocational Rehabilitation, or other federal programs for transitioning service members and veterans. Develop veterans counseling and training programs to focus on matching veterans' skills and aspirations to high-demand federal occupations projected to have heavy recruitment needs.

◯ In cooperation with OPM and the Council, conduct assessments to identify human capital requirements in support of VEI strategic planning objectives. Develop performance indicators to measure and evaluate core processes related to mission-critical needs and how to hire, retain, and develop veterans to meet those needs. Formalize and implement an agency-wide system to align performance measurement and evaluation procedures with workforce readiness, vocational alignment, and career development objectives.

◯ Ensure VEPOs are fully staffed and resourced. Continue to identify learning and resource sharing opportunities with other VEPOs, particularly between well-resourced and under-resourced agencies. Make use of veteran hiring authorities and the various flexibilities they afford to more effectively meet veteran employment objectives. Ensure that VEPO staffs are dedicated to identifying jobs that provide a good fit for veterans.

◯ Ensure that agency heads and their deputies provide dedicated and sustained commitment to VEI requirements, including full participation in council and steering committee meetings, trainings, and internal veteran-related employment activities. In cooperation with OPM and the Council, develop and maintain partnerships with other government agencies, veteran service organizations, colleges, universities, and private-sector institutions engaged with the VEI.

◯ Conduct, in cooperation with OPM and the Council, an agency assessment of employee, managerial, and executive-level perceptions and knowledge gaps in current veteran employment policies and hiring preference rules. Study participants expressed widespread dissatisfaction concerning regulations related to veterans' preference. HR professionals and senior-level agency leaders have also called for greater awareness and expertise of veteran hiring rules, compliance, and transparency.

IMPLEMENTATION ASSESSMENT OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 13518—THE VETERANS EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

■ 1.1 OVERVIEW OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 13518 AND THE VETERANS EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

On November 9, 2009, President Barack Obama signed Executive Order 13518, "Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government." The order—signed in recognition of veterans' sacrifices on behalf of the nation, the importance of public and private sector employers in supporting veterans' transition to civilian life, and the challenges veterans have faced in finding employment post-service—established the Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI). The VEI is a comprehensive program to enhance government-wide recruiting, use of applicable hiring authorities, and retention of veteran employees across federal departments and agencies. To date, it remains the most recent public avowal of support for veterans seeking careers in the federal service and the most comprehensive effort in U.S. history to improve federal employment opportunities for veterans.

The context for the order is important. At the time of E.O. 13518's signing, the United States was two years into its subprime mortgage crisis, the Great Recession had just ended, and the jobless rate for post-9/11 veterans stood at 10.2 percent—more than a percentage point higher than nonveterans (BLS, 2010). Recognizing the "prominent role" of government as "one of the Nation's leading employers" alongside private industry, the order charged the federal government with helping "to lead by example in promoting veterans' employment" (Executive Order No. 13518, 2009, p. 58533). The order acknowledges the federal government's mission-critical staffing need for "highly skilled individuals," of which veterans represent a ready-made talent pool, given their training, development, skills, experiences, and public service motivation (Executive Order No. 13518, 2009).

Since the signing of the order, veteran hiring into the federal government has increased significantly. Veterans now represent nearly one-third (30.9 percent) of the total U.S. federal workforce (OPM, 2016c), marking a five-percentage point rise since 2009—even in the face of a federal workforce contraction. The VEI, by this yardstick, has been a great success (Lunney, 2016). Although federal agencies have increased overall employment numbers and enhanced awareness of veteran-related workforce concerns, a knowledge gap remains. Examining the EO's implementation and institutionalization across the initiative's 24 agencies will reveal important patterns related to veterans' work experiences. Some evidence indicates that veterans tend to advance further than nonveterans in the federal service (in terms of GS pay grades), but current knowledge is limited concerning how well recently transitioned veterans fare in the workplace after the point of initial hire (Johnson, 2014). An ongoing study that examines recent Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

Photo: President Barack Obama signs an executive order on the employment of veterans in the federal government Nov. 9, 2009 in the Oval Office.

data suggests that, compared to nonveteran federal employees, veterans are 21.9 percent more likely to express intent to leave their current agency, but 23.5 percent less likely to express desire to leave federal service outright (Vanderschuere, 2016). In other words, veterans in the civil service who seek new job opportunities are likely looking at other federal agencies.

Both individual and workplace factors help explain these motivations among veteran federal employees. Job satisfaction, security, and fit, along with public service motivation, are well-cited predictors of turnover intention in government (Alonso & Lewis 2001; Bozeman & Su, 2015; Brewer, Selden, & Facer 2000; Bright 2005; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Naff & Crum 1999; Perry & Wise, 1990; Pitts, Marvel, & Fernandez 2001; Ritz, Brewer, & Neumann, 2016; Staats, 1988). Three factors unique to veterans may also drive this desire to look around while staying in government: the military's "normalizing effect" of frequent job changes and promotions; the ease of mobility within the federal sector offered through repeated use of veterans' preference; and the combined benefits of military and federal service (e.g., job security and defined retirement) (Vanderschuere, 2016).

These influences may differ between individual veterans. Military retirees and junior or mid-career veterans without a military pension, for instance, may hold a range of perspectives regarding their experience with federal employment. The type of position, the agency and its organizational culture, as well as its commitment to diversity, may vary in how they affect individual veterans. And while roughly one-third of all federal employees are hired through Veterans' Preference, meeting this goal may create trade-offs with other policy objectives (Lewis, 2013). Preferences in hiring may increase the chances for individual veterans to land a federal job but at the same time reduce the civil service's overall diversity (Lewis, 2017). How veteran employees factor into the composition of agency workforces, along with their higher levels of reported turnover intention, are important examples in a broader set of employment patterns that suggest differences in how the 24 participating federal departments and agencies have carried out E.O. 13518.

Such differences—in combination with the recent debate over the complexity, widespread confusion, and fairness of veteran preference rules and hiring authorities (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), 2014; Rein, 2016), as well as the effects that the rules may (or may not) have on the composition and quality of the federal workforce (Johnson, 2014; Lewis, 2013)—all motivated a study of the VEI's implementation. The corporate and non-profit sectors have provided crucial support to post-9/11 veterans, a group that has served during the longest military conflict in American history. As such, the VEI seeks to "create a program worthy of being emulated by the private sector" by stressing that government "should play a prominet role in helping veterans who may be struggling to find jobs (Executive Order No. 13518, 2009; OPM, 2016a). When government agencies work across institutional boundaries with non-government entities toward mutually beneficial outcomes, strategic planning to manage complex policy challenges can be improved over time (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). In this context, it is imperative to understand the federal government's experience with the VEI. Consequently, the start of the Trump administration presents a ripe opportunity to review the implementation of VEI over the past seven years. There is a clear need to document achievements and lessons learned in light of the policy aims outlined in E.O. 13518, and to offer recommendations on how best to shape the initiative going forward. That is the aim of this report.

1.1.1 NORMATIVE ORIENTATION

Before proceeding further, it is important to reiterate that a number of motivations may underpin preferential veteran hiring policies and initiatives to promote veterans employment. These include expressing appreciation for service on behalf of the country (and the attendant need to compensate veterans for sacrifices that can make finding employment more difficult), as well as harnessing the unique benefits veterans may bring to the workforce. In establishing the Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI), Executive Order 13158 reflects both these aims. It begins by stating that "we must do everything in our power to assist [veterans] in re-entering civilian life and finding employment," and proceeds to argue that veterans "possess a wide variety of skills and experiences, as well as the motivation for public service, that will help fulfill Federal agencies' staffing needs."

It should be stressed that this report is not intended to provide explicit justification for either of these objectives, but rather takes them as given strictly for purposes of assessing the VEI's implementation.

FIGURE 1.1: THE VETERANS EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE: PURPOSE AND GOVERNANCE

PURPOSE

Signed in 2009 under Executive Order 13518, the Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) is a comprehensive initiative to improve government-wide recruiting, use of applicable hiring authorities, and retention of veteran employees across federal departments and agencies. The VEI addresses five problem areas that an interagency working group comprised of individuals across government identified at a strategic planning session before release of the order (OPM 2010):

- Lack of clear leadership concerning the worth and importance of hiring veterans

- An interagency organizational structure that does not support advocacy for veterans' employment

- Inadequate understanding by human resources professionals regarding an advantage in the federal hiring process known as Veterans' Preference

- Insufficient understanding of Veterans' Preference and the overall hiring process by veterans and transitioning service members

- Lack of systems to match veterans' skills and education to available positions.

GOVERNANCE

The VEI is governed by a Council on Veterans Employment. The council is an interagency body comprised of the federal government's 24 largest departments and agencies. The secretaries of Labor and Veterans Affairs serve as council co-chairs, with the director of the Office of Personnel Management serving as vice chair. In addition, a steering committee, comprised of a subset of council representatives—OPM and the departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, Defense, and Homeland Security—oversees a range of activities, including overall VEI administration, agency-level implementation, performance measurement, and accountability, and guidance to the council on the VEI's structure, execution, and strategic direction.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In early 2016, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) approached the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University to begin an independent review of the federal government's implementation of E.O. 13518 over its seven-year history. OPM requested the IVMF conduct a comprehensive assessment that:

- Considers the EO's overall impact on veteran employment in the federal government;

- Identifies successful practices and implementation strategies;

- Identifies areas and opportunities for improvement; and

- Offers recommendations to senior policymakers and agency leaders to best position the federal government for future success.

Given OPM's broad mandate, the study followed a multi-method research design (Morse, 2003). The study design draws from multiple quantitative and qualitative data sources to provide a comprehensive assessment of the following research questions:

- How have the Council on Veterans Employment and its participating federal agencies implemented E.O. 13518?

- What are the key lessons learned from the Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI)?

- What can the new administration do to improve, sustain, or further institutionalize the intent of VEI across the federal government?

Data collection occurred over a 10-month span, from May 2016 through February 2017, with additional collection in September, especially with smaller agencies. The study team followed an iterative approach throughout the process as we discovered nuances in the data or topics requiring careful consideration and a range of perspectives. Sources included relevant peer-reviewed and think tank literature on veteran employment; multiple government documents related to the VEI, interagency council, and steering committee; administrative data on veteran hiring, veterans onboard, and veteran retention; semi-structured interviews with subject matter experts; and two targeted surveys of agency chief human capital officers, front-line hiring managers, and veteran employees. We provide a concept map (see Appendix C) and an overview of each of these sources and methods below.

FIGURE 1.2.1 RESEARCH STUDY CONCEPT MAP

PLANNING ⟶ STUDY EXECUTION ⟶ RESULTS

① FRAMING
- VETERAN EMPLOYMENT POLICY
- EO13518 & VETERAN EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE (VEI)

② STUDY DESIGN
- RESEARCH QUESTIONS
- IMPLEMENTATION ASSESSMENT
- MULTI-METHOD DATA COLLECTION

③ ④ PHASE I
- LITERATURE, POLICIES, AND PUBLIC DOCUMENTS
- VETERAN EMPLOYMENT TRENDS
- FEDERAL DATA ON VETERAN HIRING AND RETENTION
- AGENCY OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE

PHASE II
- IN DEPTH EXPERT INTERVIEWS (n=20)
- TARGETED SURVEYS
  - Agency chief human capital officers (n=14)
  - Federal hiring managers and employees (n=8,561)
- MULTI-METHOD ANALYSIS
- PEER REVIEW

⑤ THEMATIC-BASED FINDINGS
- POLICY GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP
  - Political leadership & stakeholder engagement
  - Goals, accountability, & metrics
  - Interagency collaboration
  - Information sharing & data analysis
- AGENCY IMPLEMENTATION & PERCEPTIONS
  - Fragmentation & barriers to adoption
  - Understanding of policies & regulations
  - Veteran employment program offices
  - Civil-military culture
- CROSS-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT
  - Veteran skill alignment
  - Civilian workforce development
  - Public-private partnerships

⑥ RECOMMENDATIONS
VETERAN EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE

POLICY

FUTURE RESEARCH

1.2.1 REVIEW OF SCHOLARLY LITERATURE AND GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

At the outset of the study, the research team conducted a literature review of academic and government-sponsored research that examined issues related to veteran employment in the federal government. When conducting the review, we aimed to establish a baseline understanding of the topic and then lay out a description, summary, and critical evaluation of the multiple issues involved. By doing so, we framed the scope of the inquiry and determined how to best utilize, prioritize, and integrate the steps involved with the mixed- methods study design (Creswell, 2013).

Reviewing publicly available information is crucial for enhancing the external and internal validity of data acquired through techniques like interviewing and surveys (Beyers et. al, 2014). The literature review also enabled us to find ways to highlight gaps within the existing body of research. While a small community of researchers has produced valuable contributions to the topics of veteran employment, and specifically hiring preference, our team found that the literature on these topics is quite sparse. Accordingly, in lieu of a stand-alone section, the report employs an integrated means of

engaging with the previous literature throughout the first two chapters. Our intent is to situate our conceptual approach, interpretations, and findings in a way that contributes to the collective knowledge on veteran employment.

In addition to examining the academic literature, the research team conducted a systematic review of presidential executive orders and memoranda, federal statutes, Congressional records and testimonies, reports written or commissioned by federal agencies, and various public records. Our review of government documents and public records also included an extensive search of information posted on federal agency websites. This analytic process involved finding, evaluating, and organizing a vast array of information contained in these sources into a manageable format to assist with content analysis (Bowen, 2009). Content analysis, in this case, involved synthesizing information gleaned from the documents with federal employment data, interviews, and survey data into themes and categories aligned with the research questions (Schreier, 2012). Each of these steps is detailed in the following sections.

1.2.2 FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT DATA ON VETERANS

E.O. 13518 requires the Council on Veterans Employment to "establish performance measures to assess the effectiveness of, and submit an annual report to the President on the status of, the Veterans Employment Initiative" (Executive Order No. 13518, 2009, p. 58533). Likewise, the order instructs the OPM director to consult with the council to "collect and post on the OPM website Government-wide statistics on the hiring of veterans" (2009, p. 58535).

In response, the council instituted a government-wide performance measurement system to track and hold agencies accountable for veteran employment outcomes. The system originally focused on overall veteran new hires and disabled veteran new hires as percentages of agencies' overall annual new hiring (veteran and non-veteran), but in FY 2015 OPM revised it to rate agencies based on a combination of four employment metrics: veteran new hires, disabled veteran new hires, veterans on-board, and veteran retention rates (OPM, 2016a). It groups agencies by size and adopts a rating scheme based on interagency comparison.

To prepare for data analysis related to the implementation assessment, the IVMF research team compiled an extensive data set that includes statistics on these metrics for each of the 24 agencies represented on the council. The data were compiled from statistics within OPM's annual reports from FY 2009 to FY 2015, titled "Employment of Veterans in the Federal Executive Branch." The source of the information within each report is OPM's Enterprise Human Resources Integration — Statistical Data Mart, which contains cleansed data about employees and their positions, along with various demographic variables (OPM, 2016a; OPM, 2017a).

Agency-level data was then juxtaposed with employee perceptions gathered from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). Federal agencies are required by law to conduct an annual survey to assess employee satisfaction as well as leadership and management practices that contribute to agency performance. FEVS captures key performance metrics and measures employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, employees engage with their jobs and agency missions (OPM, 2008; OPM, 2016b). We centered our analysis of the agency-level and FEVS data on five principle aims:

- Inspect, evaluate, and interpret data related to veteran hiring, veterans onboard, and veteran retention to determine variation across federal agencies;
- Examine information related to annual performance reviews;
- Support analysis related to the development of categories and themes;
- Depict agency outcomes through comparative charts and graphics; and
- Provide, verify, and strengthen information related to answering the three primary research questions.

1.2.3 INTERVIEWS

Our consultation with OPM, along with the literature review and examination of federal employment data, provided a foundational understanding of the pertinent issues related to the VEI and veterans' employment in the federal government. Based on this initial appraisal, the research team crafted semi-structured, in-depth interviews to capture the perceptions of select political appointees and civil servants closely involved with designing and managing the VEI, as well as additional stakeholders concerned with veterans' employment.

In-depth interviews aim to achieve both breadth of analysis across the main issues and depth of coverage within each (Legard et. al, 2003). Interviewees were purposely identified and selected based on their ability to provide knowledge and insight regarding the VEI and veterans employment in the federal sector. As such, the interview questions were structured to avoid confining the interviewees to a restricted set of answers. Highly experienced professionals, such as the government officials whom we consulted, do not typically want to be constrained by close-ended questions. They tend to articulate their opinions and explain their perspectives (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002). These elite officials can be loosely described as situated close to power or policymaking.

Interviewing leaders and managers with proximity to the inner workings of government sheds light on the interactions and decision-making processes that take place outside of public view (Lilleker, 2003). A flexible interview protocol (see Appendix C) allowed the researchers to gather rich information by interacting directly with each participant. The research team conducted in-depth confidential interviews with 20 senior officials and subject matter experts who were either closely involved with the VEI from inception to the present or possess deep expertise with veterans' employment issues. Access to insiders enabled the team to gather valuable information related to the council and the VEI. The interviews also provided a means to cross-validate and interpret evidence that emerged as the study evolved (Beyers et. al., 2014).

An open coding technique was used to identify and organize the interviewees' thoughts, ideas, and meanings. The codes were generated by the team's analysis and assessment of the interview transcripts to form broad categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Although there are many ways to conduct open coding, including line-by-line examination and study of the entire interview transcript, this project used Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software to review larger sections of content. Atlas.ti enabled us to identify patterns and themes from the interview transcripts, and then organize the information into categories focused on facilitators of, and barriers to, implementation of the VEI and promotion of veterans' employment in the federal government. By examining the content of the transcripts, the team established valid inferences between the information obtained through participants and the publicly available documents that were examined in the study's initial phase (Krippendorff, 1980; Krippendorff, 2012).

Working systematically through the interview content to identify topics and themes is a critical step for addressing the overall research questions. While the interviews with policy-makers provided a valuable means to gather exclusive information, the participants themselves may be inherently biased because they possess a stake in the institutional system that made them elites (Field & Higley, 1980). Due to their position within the organizational structure, senior officials and administrators may also be less exposed to or unaware of some of the impacts of policy enactment. To account for this potential limitation, the study included two surveys with employees at differing levels within the federal civil service.

1.2.4 TARGETED SURVEYS

Policy implementation refers to what develops between the establishment of a governmental initiative and its ultimate impact (O'Toole, 2000). Likewise, the core mission of implementation research is to describe, assess, and explain "what

is happening and why" (Werner, 2004, 1-2), especially when policymakers are uncertain about whether a new initiative is functioning as intended. Moreover, implementation studies require systematic and consistent information from people involved with the design and management of innovative programs such as the VEI (Werner, 2004). Mixed methods designs are preferable for implementation research because they lead to a better understanding of the issues than qualitative or quantitative approaches carried out independently, and improve the overall quality of evidence (Palinkas et. al, 2015; Stake, 2010).

In this case, there was a clear need to go beyond the interview process to assemble detailed, comparable information from large numbers of individuals (Werner, 2004). Survey questions provide a convenient way to ask the same types of questions in the same way to multiple informants, especially when interviews cannot generate the statistical data needed to address the full scope of the research questions (Stake, 2010). When crafting the survey instruments, we anticipated that the organizational context would have an impact on the type of questions that we would be able to ask. Although the VEI has been implemented across 24 federal agencies, each agency has its own organizational culture. Thus, it was important to maintain a consistent data collection process. When the questions are as specific as possible, the likelihood for attaining comparability of results is enhanced. The two surveys, therefore, seek to provide converging lines of inquiry that can be triangulated with differing sources of data (Yin, 1994).

The survey phase of the data collection process ran concurrently with the interviews. Two surveys were distributed through OPM. One was aimed at the 24 agency-level chief human capital officers, and a second, broader survey consulted federal hiring managers (who may or may not be veterans) and veteran employees. The purpose of these two surveys was to capture a greater diversity of viewpoints on the VEI from human resource leaders, hiring officials, and front-line federal employees.

The IVMF research team generated the content for the CHCO survey prioritizing three subject areas. The first area sought to capture how (and to what degree) CHCOs have been involved in the implementation of VEI and Veterans' Preference. Questions guided by the second subject area focused on the difficulties CHCOs encountered during policy implementation, as well as lessons learned. In the third subject area, questions gathered information on perceptions held by CHCOs of the effectiveness of these policies. Example questions from these subject areas can be seen in Figure 1.2.4.1.

FIGURE 1.2.4.1 SURVEY 1: FEDERAL CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER SURVEY: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VETERANS EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE – SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS

To protect respondent anonymity, no demographic or identifying information was collected, aside from the size of the respondent's agency size. The survey content was designed in Qualtrics research software and subsequently reviewed by OPM. OPM then circulated the survey through an anonymous email link. Forty-three respondents answered the survey, of which fourteen were CHCOs (58 percent of the target population). In accordance with the objective of capturing CHCOs' perspectives, results we report from this survey correspond strictly to the CHCO respondents.

The content of the second survey was designed for hiring managers and veteran employees in the federal government. Since the survey targeted two populations that could potentially overlap, the architecture was designed with filtering questions. Based on their answers, respondents were sifted into specific lines of questioning designed for their respective populations. For example, if a respondent answered that they were a hiring manager, the next line of questions they received would be different from respondents who answered that they were not hiring managers. Non-veteran employees who were not hiring managers could also answer a few brief questions. Additionally, because the survey was open to both current employees and past employees, past employees received questions with different tenses than current employees. Because the survey was almost exclusively taken by current rather than former federal employees, however, it is possible that our findings may not have captured the viewpoints of departed personnel that may have left the civil service due to dissatisfaction, termination, or other unfavorable reasons or motivations.

The surveys were designed to capture two basic areas of information-gathering for hiring managers and veteran employees. First, questions inquired about the respondent's understanding, experience with, and perceptions of the Veterans' Preference and veteran employment in the federal government. Second, questions asked respondents about their perceptions of the effectiveness of the VEI's implementation and impact on veteran employment. Examples questions from these subject areas can be found in Figure 1.2.4.2.

FIGURE 1.2.4.2 SURVEY 2: VETERAN EMPLOYMENT IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SURVEY - SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS
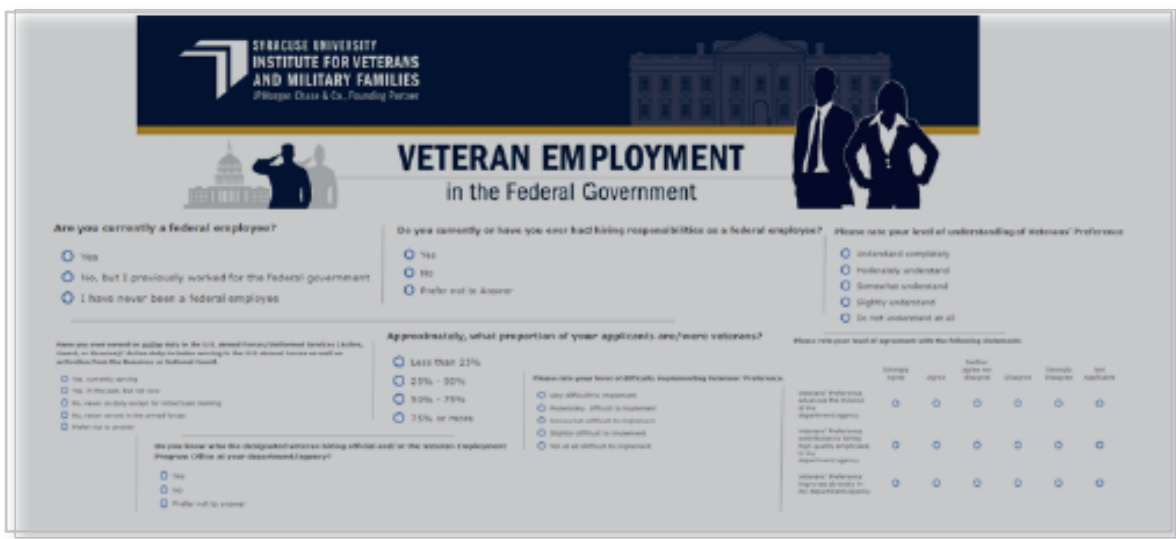
Due to the much larger population for this survey, the survey instrument contained several demographic questions such as age, race, pay grade, and the department or agency for which the respondent works. The survey was reviewed and distributed by OPM via an anonymous email link in Qualtrics. The survey generated 8,863 responses. Of this total, 99.5 percent of respondents were current federal employees, 74 percent did not have hiring responsibilities, and 64 percent were veterans.

1.2.5 ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This study proceeds with the following assumptions.

- The data provided by OPM and federal agencies are valid.

- The literature review is comprehensive and based on the IVMF research team's core competencies.

- The viewpoints of interviewees are confidential and independent, yet potentially biased.

- The electronic survey instruments were administered confidentially by OPM and partnering federal agencies.

- Respondents to the survey instruments provided confidential and independent responses, but their opinion and views are potentially biased.

- Conceptual, explanatory, and descriptive threats to the study's internal and external validity are addressed through the multi-method research approach and methodology.

The findings and recommendations provided through this study rely on the quality and rigor of the analytical process. Limitations, however, can occur when the informants give potentially biased viewpoints. This type of limitation can take place when there is no guarantee that the opinions of the interviewees and the survey respondents are generated independently (Maxwell, 1996). Thus, we included open-ended questions as part of our data collection effort and maintained an unrestricted stance concerning matters that interviewees and survey respondents chose to address. Maintaining this approach provided an opportunity to gather evidence in contrast to official government policy, the views of other informants, and the research team's own assumptions and understanding of the matters discussed.

The research team used three overarching techniques to mitigate the limitations of this research project. First, triangulation of different data sources led to a coherent justification for the thematic content (Creswell, 2013). Second, the qualitative narrative makes use of rich contextual description—we aimed to provide readers with a thorough historical overview and insight into the VEI as a new governmental initiative. Third, prolonged time investigating the inner workings of the VEI and previous research related to its complex policy aims helped craft an informed foundation of the issues examined.

The main limitation of the study was gaining access to study participants and managing challenges related to the collection of data. Gaining legitimacy as an outside entity as well as selecting an appropriate research design and study team also imposed constraints. Moreover, we faced complications with compiling administrative data sets that included comparable information on year-over-year government-wide and agency-by-agency onboarding, hiring, and retention trends. The team assembled an extensive data set on each of these metrics over different time periods (e.g., data on onboarding and hiring include figures from a longer period of years than do data on retention), but examining these trends along all anticipated dimensions was not possible. For example, while the team possesses data on onboarding, hiring, and retention data over time and by agency, the data set lacked full, detailed information on how these trends look by age, service-era, gender, and other demographic categories.

Our team surveyed the entire population of chief human capital officers (survey #1), but as noted above, we did not receive a complete set of responses. We surveyed a convenience sample of agency hiring managers and veteran employees (survey #2). This survey was purposely administered using a convenience-based rather than a statistical sampling approach for two major reasons: first, the significant difficulties of compiling agency-by-agency employee contact information to construct a sampling frame inclusive of all individuals in the target population, and implementing a corresponding statistical sampling technique like random sampling; and second, the lower costs, greater ease, and particular usefulness of convenience-based approaches to garner and explore insights on a range of issues from populations that may be hard to reach (Henry 1990).

As with all applications of the convenience-based approach, these benefits are balanced against the fact that data come from respondents who self-select into the sample based on their willingness and ready availability to participate, meaning the data may not be generalizable given systematic underlying differences in survey respondents versus non-respondents. The OPM leadership disseminated the survey instrument to all 24 agencies participating in the VEI, and each agency made it available to their employees. The feedback received, as described throughout the report, was uneven, and the overall survey response rates did present a limitation to this assessment. Response rates were impacted in part by the method through which the survey instruments were disseminated, received, and returned—both surveys were built by IVMF staff, then given to OPM administrators who subsequently disseminated them via email to all 24 federal agencies.

While OPM provided access to each of the 24 agencies, who exactly responded to the surveys was beyond our control. One consequence in the case of the hiring manager and federal employee survey was that there was limited participation and representation in the sample of individuals from larger, more complex and geographically dispersed agencies including the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense. In total, the survey of hiring managers and federal employees captured 0.4 percent of the total federal workforce and 0.8 percent of all federal veteran employees based on 2016 statistics provided by OPM.

A full breakdown of the distribution of survey respondents by agency, and the proportion of these respondents relative to their total agency workforces, is provided in Appendix D. Appendix D also provides a breakdown of the distribution of respondents to the CHCO survey by agency size categories (which, as previously noted, were used in lieu of agency names to protect respondent anonymity). Ultimately, despite these limitations, the team established adequate levels of access to facilitate its data collection efforts, and employed a range of different methods and skill sets to design, plan, and execute the study while managing constraints of time, financial resources, and underlying research limitations.

1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report is organized into five chapters. Chapter One summarizes Executive Order 13518 and the VEI, then lays out our study's purpose, research questions, and methodology. Chapter Two sets the study in the context of past and current public policy by reviewing the literature on veterans' employment issues, the rules and procedures governing the federal Veterans' Preference and preferential hiring authorities, and trends in federal employment of veterans since the VEI's inception in 2009. Chapter Three provides an in-depth overview of the VEI, focusing on its history and formulation, objectives, governance structure, and approach to measuring agency performance in employing veterans. Drawing from federal employment data and workforce trends, it then presents an overview of how the VEI's participating agencies have performed with respect to key employment metrics. Chapter Four, the implementation assessment, presents 10 major findings based on analysis of documents and the data from the interviews and surveys of senior OPM officials, agency leaders, chief human capital officers, federal employees and hiring managers, and other stakeholders with insight into the VEI and veterans' employment issues. Chapter five concludes the study with recommendations for OPM, agency leaders, and the Council on Veterans Employment.

In addition to the main chapters, the report includes several appendices that provide additional technical detail related to the research design, analytical methods, and terminology employed throughout the study. Appendix A presents a copy of E.O. 13518. Appendix B features a glossary of terms. Appendix C presents the interview protocol the research team used. Appendix D describes the survey design and presents the survey instrument and related-information. Appendix E provides a concept map for the VEI. Appendix F summarizes pertinent agency-level employment data in greater detail. Appendix G presents resources and programs available for veterans during and after their transition from military service.

FEDERAL POLICY AND PRACTICE IN VETERAN HIRING

CHAPTER 2

■ 2.1 VETERAN EMPLOYMENT POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States government maintains a longstanding commitment to hiring veterans. Throughout our history, Congress has enacted many laws to ensure that veterans seeking federal employment are not penalized for their period of military service. Early forms of preference were introduced during and after the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Although no legal foundation was in place to administer the eligibility of veterans for civil service jobs at the time, certain commissioned officers and some enlisted men were rewarded for their service through informal means. Based in part on European models, the new American government adopted the use of pensions, financial bonuses, free hospitalization for injuries, disability payments, land grants, and other special forms of compensation (OPM, 2017c; VA, 2012).

Later, the General Pension Act of 1862 extended and formalized a series of new medical, pension, and family-related benefits for Union veterans. During the Civil War, the nation's veteran population swelled from roughly 80,000 to over 1.9 million. At the end of the war, in 1865, Congress passed the first major veterans' preference legislation, declaring the following (VA, 2012):

> **"**Persons honorably discharged from the military or naval service by reason of disability resulting from wounds or sickness incurred in the line of duty shall be preferred for appointments to civil offices, provided they are found to possess the business capacity necessary for the proper discharge of the duties of such offices.**"**

More than 50 years later, the first major expansion of veterans' preference took place to meet the needs of the more than 4.7 million Americans who served in World War I. The Census Act (and later the Deficiency Act of 1919) granted hiring advantages for all honorably discharged veterans, their widows, and the wives of injured veterans. This constituted a significant expansion because a service-connected disability would no longer be the primary eligibility requirement and spouses of veterans became entitled to hiring preference. This law also redefined eligible veterans to mean all persons who served in an active military capacity and were honorably discharged, whether the service was in a time of war or not (OPM, 2017b; VA, 2012).

The foundation for today's system was further established during World War II. As the nation mobilized for conflict in Europe and the Pacific, Congress created the nation's first peacetime draft by passing the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940. Additionally, the statute granted reemployment rights to each person who left a job to join the armed forces, a guarantee that stands to this day. Furthermore, the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944 authorized the president to set aside government positions for veterans for the duration of the war and for five years afterward. Veterans were given preference for projects involving expenditure of federal funds, and hiring managers that declined to hire veterans were required to justify such decisions in writing (VA, 2012).

In the decades since, the nature and administration of preferential hiring of veterans at the federal level has evolved considerably, but the underlying goal remains the same. In exchange for a small minority answering the call to defend the nation, the great majority extends a measure of "good will and support" in recognition of sacrifices made by their fellow citizens. Two additional historical developments significantly impacted present-day veteran employment policy.

First, the enactment of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the GI Bill, stands as a prominent example of how government can offer social opportunity, encourage active citizenship, and foster democracy. It provided veterans with funding for vocational training, higher education, low-cost mortgages, low-interest small business loans, and unemployment compensation upon discharge from the service. The key to the GI Bill's remarkable success was the understanding that a binding social contract had been established between citizens who served and their government (Mettler, 2005). It is widely recognized as a ticket to the middle class (Batten, 2011; Jolly, 2013; Mettler, 2005).

The second noteworthy event was elimination of the military draft in 1973, which had been in effect through the Korean and Vietnam wars. The draft had been a vital component of American national security and a policy with widespread support, but the social, economic, and political processes through which the draft ended represent an important historical development with long-lasting implications (Fordham, 2016). When conscription ended and the nation moved to an "all-volunteer force" over the following decade, the Montgomery GI Bill (enacted in 1984) became a cornerstone of military recruitment. Its provision of incentives for those who serve remains critically important for raising and maintaining our military readiness—a matter of ongoing national security.

Veterans' Preference is a subset of the broader array of benefits the nation provides its veterans. By granting a favorable position for veterans seeking government employment, Veterans' Preference builds upon the GI Bill and the social contract underpinning America's all-volunteer force by acknowledging the economic loss some citizens experience while serving. It recognizes the nation's obligation to those injured and disabled in the line of duty (OPM, 2010). Each generation of veterans has battled for the resources needed to even the playing field with those who did not serve in the military. Thus, the scope and generosity of benefits—including the Veterans' Preference—have grown in response to objections and claims over time (Kleykamp & Hipes, 2014; Ridgeway, 2011; Severo & Milford, 1989; Wright, 2012 as cited in Kleykamp, Hipes, & MacLean, 2018). From a societal standpoint, policies to support veterans are not intended to elevate such individuals vis-à-vis non-veteran civilians, but rather to provide compensation and equity for their time spent or disabilities incurred during military service.

In recent years, successive presidential administrations, Congress, the nonprofit and corporate sectors, and the American people have demonstrated unprecedented levels of support for veterans of Afghanistan, Iraq, and other post-9/11 theaters of conflict. Education, as in the past, continues to be a critical aspect of post-service adjustment and reintegration. The nature of work is changing in today's knowledge-based economy, making technological training and college more essential. A baccalaureate degree, in many ways, has become the equivalent of a high school diploma for previous generations of the professional workforce (Pynes, 2013).

Recognizing this, in 2008 Congress enacted a "GI Bill for the 21st century," which dramatically increased education benefits and simplified the process through which unused entitlements can be transferred to spouses or children.

Moreover, the federal government strengthened opportunities in federal contracting for service-disabled veteran businesses and created the Commission on Care for America's Returning Warriors. The VEI and related governmental initiatives built upon this progress. The administration of President Donald J. Trump is poised to sustain the work of its predecessors by drawing from past bipartisan political cooperation and interagency collaboration to support veterans' employment.

2.1.1 VETERANS EMPLOYMENT SINCE THE GREAT RECESSION

The U.S. subprime mortgage crisis and the ensuing global financial market crash of 2008-2009 led to the most significant economic downturn since the Great Depression. In November 2009, when President Obama signed the executive order that created the VEI, the jobless rate for post-9/11 veterans stood at 10.2 percent—more than a percentage point higher than nonveterans (BLS, 2010). The recession hit during the gradual troop surges in Afghanistan and Iraq, initiated by President Bush and continued by the Obama administration. By the end of 2011, as military operations in the Middle East were deescalating, the three-month moving average for unemployed post-9/11 veterans peaked at 13.9 percent, a full four points higher than for nonveterans (Faberman & Foster, 2013).

Although the Great Recession ended eight years ago, its deep impacts are still being felt, with the path toward recovery extremely fragile and uneven (Dolan, 2016). An ongoing question related to economic analysis and unemployment patterns is to determine how and why some regional economies and the people that inhabit those regions react differently to recessions (Martin, 2012). The unemployment gap between veterans and nonveterans has narrowed in recent years, due in part to the improving U.S. economy and more employers making concerted efforts to hire veterans (Maury et. al, 2016).

As of August 2017, for example, only 3.7 percent of all U.S. veterans were jobless—significantly lower than the overall national rate of 4.4 percent—but data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has shown consistently higher annual unemployment rates among recent veterans. For post-9/11 veterans, the most recent statistics (annual averages for 2016) indicate an overall unemployment rate of 5.1 percent, and younger Americans who served in uniform are still experiencing particularly elevated levels of unemployment—9.2 percent for 18- to 24-year-olds and 6.4 percent for those between 25 and 34 (BLS, 2017a).

For women with military service, the most recent unemployment rate of 5.0 percent also exceeds the overall national average. In 2016, approximately 5.5 percent of African American veterans and 4.9 percent of Latino and Hispanic veterans were looking for work, although the current unemployment rates for these groups are lower than their civilian counterparts (8.4 percent for African Americans and 5.6 percent for Latinos and Hispanics). In contrast, the overall jobless rates for white veterans (4.1 percent) and Asian-American veterans (2.1 percent) remain lower than the overall national average (BLS, 2016; BLS, 2017a). To reiterate, the overall veterans' employment situation has been improving. It remains to be seen whether imbalances in jobless rates across age, gender, race, and other demographic categories will even out over time.

Questions over why today's highly trained and experienced veterans have encountered higher average rates of unemployment than civilians have confounded researchers, employers, and veteran advocates (Gillums, 2016). More than three million veterans have joined the civilian workforce since September 2001 and one million are expected to join by 2020. Over 11 million veterans, approximately half of the nation's veteran population and 8 percent of all American workers, are now active participants in the civilian labor force (BLS, 2015; MacLean and Kleykamp, 2016; Maury et. al, 2016).

The knowledge, skills, and abilities individuals gain through work, training, and experience is a closely related determinant of vulnerability to unemployment (Thiede and Monnat, 2016). At the height of the Great Recession, over 900,000 veterans were unemployed, and more than three million job openings existed throughout the country. Many employers faced difficulty finding workers with the skills or training needed to quality for them (U.S. House Committee on Veterans Affairs, 2017). Despite efforts on the part of corporations, the nonprofit sector, and government to encourage veteran hiring, higher rates of unemployment for certain groups persist.

Several underlying causes appear to have contributed to this predicament. First, the latest cohort of veterans is younger and may experience higher rates of unemployment than the typical worker. Second, the degree to which military skills and experience are transferable to the civilian sector is uncertain. Third, research indicates that people who find work during an economic downturn end up worse off than those who joined the workforce during better economic times. The high rate of veteran unemployment after the financial crash may reflect this historical tendency. Finally, wartime deployments pose great challenges with readjustment and community reintegration, especially for job-hunting and maintaining gainful employment (Faberman & Foster, 2013).

Combat exposure or post-traumatic stress, though, are not always the sole drivers of readjustment difficulties. Factors such as financial stress, injuries, strained relationships, substance abuse, educational factors, and family responsibilities can significantly increase readjustment challenges stemming from trying to find and hold a job (Pease, Billera & Gerard, 2015). Accordingly, while developing marketable skills and obtaining gainful employment build a foundation for a productive transition from military service—offering financial compensation, a social network, and a stable environment that can facilitate further adjustment (Schafer et. al, 2016)—the pathway to civilian employment can still be daunting and unpredictable.

For every service member, the decision-making process concerning whether to stay in the military or leave is influenced by their personal and family life, their abilities, and their prospects that exist on the outside. Whether skills are in high or low demand by civilian employers impacts not only veterans, but the general workforce as well (Loughran, 2014). Ultimately, for those who decide to leave, there is a reentry cost to the civilian job sector that depends on the state of the economy. As the business cycle worsens, the opportunity cost rises, and vice-versa (Mann, 2012).

When military service members transition to civilian life, they go through a process known as community reintegration. Reintegration includes participation in family responsibilities, working or other meaningful experiences such as going to college or trade school, as well as developing social relationships and the capacity to live independently (Resnik & Bradford et al., 2012; Ross & DeVoe, 2014). Veterans typically describe this passage as disorienting because they feel caught between two separate cultures that seem like different worlds (Cogan, 2016; Demers, 2011). The military is a separate subculture of American society, with a belief system, traditions, norms, and perceptions that impacts how its members think, communicate, and relate with themselves and civilians (Schake and Mattits, 2016).

Service members carry the values, attitudes, and behaviors gained while serving back into the civilian world, which includes the workplace. Most seem to readjust within a matter of months, but many veterans have difficulty adapting due to the cultural shift, mental health concerns, and/or physical disabilities (Coll, Weiss, & Yarvis, 2011). The VEI's focus on post-service transition is a common area of emphasis among policymakers, employers, and veterans themselves. Despite ample transition-oriented resources available to veterans, steady pathways to civilian employment can still be challenging. Translating military experience, obtaining educational and vocational credentials, identifying the right job prospects, and general job availability are among many typical challenges that veterans face while transitioning (Maury et. al, 2016).

Finding gainful employment is one of the most common initial transition adjustments. Job turnover appears to be lower for veterans once a better fit is experienced, confirming other findings within the research community that working in one's desired field is one of the most important factors for increasing retention in the workforce. Learning more about

the nuances of hiring, turnover, and retention will improve the implementation of government and corporate employment initiatives (Schafer et. al, 2016). The challenges of re-integration for this generation of veterans will likely continue, and the research community is well-positioned to assist with understanding the dynamics of veterans' reintegration to civilian life, from both the veteran and societal perspectives (Kleykamp, 2013). Given the importance of securing employment during the readjustment process, post-service transition remains a key area of emphasis for policy makers, employers, and veterans themselves.

One major challenge for both veterans and employers focused on transition issues is matching military skills to civilian job requirements (Hall et. al, 2014; Maury et. al, 2016). To address this, in November 2010 President Obama signed the VOW to Hire Heroes Act into law. It provides tax credits for employers who hire veterans and veterans with disabilities, as well as additional GI Bill and vocational rehabilitation benefits for qualified individuals to train for high-demand jobs (House Committee on Veterans Affairs, 2017).

In addition to these features, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act is also a noteworthy policy change because it now requires all transitioning service members to attend a program known as Transition Goals Plans Success (Transition GPS), which improves upon similar programs that had been in place to assist since the reduction in force after the Cold War. In addition to guidance on broader transition issues such as financial management and health care, Transition GPS addresses the following veterans-related employment topics (Collins et. al 2014, 7-8):

- An individualized assessment concerning various civilian positions in the private sector for which a service member may be qualified;

- Professional certifications, including licensing and apprenticeships;

- Public and community service opportunities, including federal employment opportunities and veterans' hiring preferences;

- Self-employment and entrepreneurship, including small business and entrepreneurship programs for veterans; and

- Education and training assistance, including use of veterans' educational benefits and other job training opportunities.

In addition to the VEI and VOW Act, the U.S. Government developed provided many resources to help veterans prepare for the civilian workforce, built new online tools to assist with job hunting, and partnered with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the private sector to facilitate connection of veterans with companies that want to hire them (White House, 2017b).[1] Other former government initiatives such as the White House's Joining Forces initiative heightened public awareness of the challenges facing many veterans and military families. Embracing the notion that hiring veterans represents both good citizenship and good business, many private firms have mobilized at an unprecedented level to establish veteran employment programs (Haynie, 2016). For example, in 2011, 11 companies set up the 100,000 Jobs Mission with a goal of hiring the same number of veterans by 2020. Since then, more than 360,000 former service members have been hired through the partnership, which has grown to more than 230 companies that represent nearly every industry in the U.S. economy. Building on this momentum, the coalition has rebranded itself as the Veteran Jobs Mission and raised its hiring target to 1 million veterans (Veteran Jobs Mission, 2016). U.S. employers have answered this call, marshaling a nationwide effort to hire, train, and empower veterans through related initiatives such as Onward to Opportunity, Hiring Our Heroes, Hire Heroes USA, and LinkedIn for Veterans. Initially focused on the military-to-civilian transition and securing employment in general, such initiatives have evolved to focus more closely on employment challenges among younger veterans, who often lack the education, credentialing, and work experience needed to be successful in the civilian labor market.

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1. See Appendix G: Resources and Programs for Veterans Employment

Government, as always, must continue to learn from the private sector. Since their origins during the Great Depression and New Deal, employment and training programs in the United States have meshed public- and private-sector resources. Private-sector employers, however, provide the bulk of workforce development and continue to dwarf public-sector activity (Heinrich, 2016). Importantly, as private-sector hiring programs have evolved over the past decade, attention and discourse have increasingly focused on how firms can quantify the value that veterans provide to their firms to secure a return on the investments that have been made. In short, multidisciplinary academic research indicates how and why companies could potentially gain a competitive advantage by hiring people with military backgrounds (Haynie, 2016).

2.1.2 CURRENT GAPS IN RESEARCH AND POLICY

Although employment policies for veterans have been the topic of some academic studies and several government reports, we know little about how the federal workforce and its employees have been impacted (Lewis, 2013). To this point, most of the studies on this topic have been reactive in nature due to the escalating rates of unemployment among recent veterans (Atuel et. al, 2016). There are, however, some notable exceptions. Meredith Kleykamp and colleague Alair MacLean have conducted several sociological investigations that examine how the military as an institution influences patterns of veterans' readjustment, employment, and income (Kleykamp, 2006; Kleykamp, 2007; Kleykamp, 2009; Kleykamp, 2010; Kleykamp, 2013; MacLean, 2010; MacLean, 2017; MacLean & Kleykamp, 2014; MacLean & Kleykamp, 2016). Public policy expert Gregory Lewis, adding to sporadic work contributed by others, has published studies related to veterans in the federal workforce (Ban, 2011; Emmert and Lewis, 1982; Lewis, 2013; Lewis, 2015; Lewis & Emmert, 1984; Lewis & Pathak, 2014; Mani, 1999; McElhinny, 2000; Johnson, 2014).

Building on the work of academics, a small community of additional researchers has been contributing to the knowledge base over the past several years. The RAND Corporation, for example, has published a series of studies that examine veterans and jobs (Batka & Hall 2016; Hall et. al, 2014; Hall et. al, 2015; Heaton, 2012; Heaton & Krull, 2012; Loughran, 2014). Likewise, Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) has conducted several studies related to workforce readiness as subset of its overall research portfolio (Bradbard, Armstrong, & Maury, 2016; Haynie, 2012; Haynie, 2016; Maury, Stone, & Roseman 2014; Maury et. al, 2016). Of these, two studies have investigated the relationship among job preferences, retention, and earnings among veterans (Maury, Stone, & Roseman 2014; Maury et. al, 2016).

Among other important findings, these studies show that after leaving the military former service members tend to stay in their initial jobs less than one year, suggesting problems with workforce alignment (by contrast, when the career interests of veteran job seekers and employers are well-matched, job retention, duration, and personal income tend to improve). Phillip Carter and research associates at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) recently carried out a mixed methods study that examined veteran retention and performance in the private sector. In relation to our assessment, the most relevant finding of the CNAS study is that the private sector and government agencies collect and track data related to veteran employment through uneven, inconsistent processes. Such a lack of integrated, consistent data collection efforts challenges the research community's ability to longitudinally measure the effectiveness of public-private partnerships, identify at-risk groups within the veteran population, and inform resource allocation decisions (Schafer et. al, 2016).

While corporate partnerships have successfully promoted veteran hiring through aggressive recruitment goals, the strategy has placed too much emphasis on the number of hires. Less effort and resources have been dedicated to supporting career development. Developing metrics to track and evaluate veteran recruitment, performance, and retention can support the business case for hiring veterans and provide valuable data to shape ongoing veteran employment programs (Hall et. al, 2014; Schafer et. al, 2016). Performance measures and organizational learning are critical factors for assessing the effectiveness of new initiatives such as the VEI.

Upon military separation, veterans often join the civilian workforce to either extend their career in a comparable civilian position (Haynie, 2016). Along these lines, economic research generally accepts the idea that the alignment of workers to jobs and organizations is not random (Hirsch and Mehay, 2003). In a recent investigation David Schulker applied data from the American Community Survey to examine the jobs and industries that veterans tend to work in. The results showed that former service members gravitate toward civilian occupations that mesh well with military job functions (Schulker, 2017). Thus, it is important to account for how the transferability of skills impacts occupational choices and how newly hired veterans get placed into jobs. Failure to do so will lead to biased, unreliable assessments (Hirsch and Mehay, 2003).

In terms of public-sector employment, research shows veterans are three to four times more likely to obtain federal jobs than those without military service backgrounds—an extraordinary finding that holds even after accounting for differences in gender, race, sexual orientation, and education (Lewis, 2013). What factors attract and motivate people to pursue government work have been a longstanding subject for those who study public service (Bright, 2016), yet there is little empirical evidence to attest to what degree preference impacts the recruitment, retention, and career development of veterans.

What is quite clear, however, is the enduring commitment that the federal government has provided to those who have served, reflecting what George Washington called the "decent provision [of] future support" necessary to sustain the social contract underpinning today's all-volunteer force between government and its citizens. Preferential hiring also gives the public an opportunity for enhanced return on its investment in veterans' training and experience acquired while in uniform and gives those leaving the military an opportunity to continue their service in another capacity.

The VEI is an unequivocal statement of presidential support for hiring veterans, but how to implement its policy mandates without sacrificing merit remains a challenge (Ban, 2016). Some research findings, for instance, imply that serving on active duty, and receiving an honorable discharge, is a good indicator that one will be successful in a future civilian job and therefore plays the same role as the merit system (Johnson, 2014). Debates over this issue are as old as the civil service itself. Hiring managers have broad authority under existing statutes to hire veterans from any eligible source, and current regulations do not require any exact appointment process. At the same time, hiring managers must seek a balance as they carry out stated policies related to Veterans' Preference, considering the tradeoffs between the benefits of veteran employment and its potential impact on workforce diversity and quality (Ban, 2016; Johnson, 2014; OPM, 2017c).

2.2 VETERANS' PREFERENCE

A hiring authority is a law, order, or regulation that enables an agency to hire someone into the federal civil service.[2] Veterans' Preference is a statutory right codified in federal law that provides advantages to qualified individuals participating in the competitive and excepted service hiring processes administered by OPM. The policy applies to almost all positions in the federal civil service. However, not every former member of the U.S. military is eligible for Veterans' Preference, and Veterans' Preference does not guarantee applicants a job.

As specified in 5 U.S.C. 2108, federal law defines eligibility for Veterans' Preference in terms of two major criteria: disability status and nature of service. To be eligible, a veteran must have a service-connected disability, have earned a campaign

2. Excepted service hiring provides agencies with authority under certain circumstances to hire individuals without using typical competitive hiring procedures. For more information, see https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/excepted-service/.

badge or Purple Heart, or have served on active duty in the armed forces during specified time periods. As defined in 5 U.S.C. 2101(2), "armed forces" means the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard (OPM, 2017c). A veteran who meets the eligibility criteria for preference will remain eligible throughout his or her lifetime, assuming the standards do not change. Likewise, an ineligible veteran will not become eligible without a change in policy or personal disability status (Collins, 2016).

Veterans' Preference does not apply to individuals who retired from the military at the rank of Major, Lieutenant Commander (O-4) or higher. Military retirees are ineligible unless the individual has both a service-connected disability and left the service at the O-4 pay grade or lower (OPM, 2017c). Members of the National Guard and Reserve components of the five military branches are also ineligible unless they have served on active duty in a non-training capacity for over six months and met all other eligibility criteria. National Guard and Reserve veterans who became disabled while on active duty for training, though, are preference-eligible. Veterans' Preference also applies to reductions in force and in some circumstances can be used to waive an age requirement for a job (MSPB, 2014).

Veterans' Preference applies to nearly all permanent and temporary positions in the executive branch. Eligible veterans use different types of preference depending on the nature of the job to which they apply and the accompanying process used to assess and select applicants (Collins, 2016). According to OPM, Veterans' Preference does not apply to:

- Positions in the Senior Executive Service (SES);
- Positions in the executive branch that require Senate confirmation; and
- Positions in the legislative and judicial branches, except those in the competitive service.[3]

OPM validates and establishes certain minimum qualification requirements for hiring or promoting an individual into a job under the competitive process. They are normally articulated in terms of years of experience, education, or a combination of the two. They may also be expressed as proficiency levels on a competency-based evaluation. Such qualification requirements are intended to reduce the level of processing of unqualified candidates by screening out those unlikely to succeed in the job (OPM, 2007).

On May 11, 2010, President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum, "Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process," which directed federal agencies to take a series of actions toward this end. Changes included eliminating essay-style questions—where candidates explain their knowledge, skills and abilities—and requirements to complete lengthy, elaborate forms. Applicants are now allowed to submit cover letters and résumés or complete simplified, plain-language applications. These changes were designed to fix a system that the memorandum itself described as overly complex and inefficient (Davidson, 2010).

2.2.1 CATEGORY RATING

In addition to streamlining application processes, President Obama's memorandum required agencies to use the category rating approach to rate applicants, which has been an option for federal agencies since Congress authorized it in 2002 as an alternative to the numeric rating process (MSPB, 2014). Category rating does away with the previous government-wide

---

3. The competitive service consists of all civilian positions in the federal government that are not specifically exempt by law, executive order, or OPM regulation. Positions that are exempt are part of the excepted service. Certain agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency, are not required to follow the rules for veterans' preference (MSPB, 2014). For more information, see Chapter 3 of Veteran Hiring in the Civil Service (MSPB, 2014).

rule of three, which used a 100-point scale to rank the top three eligible candidates in the order of their earned score plus any additional points gained through veterans' preference. In the past, hiring managers could select only from the top three highest-scoring applications and could not pass over a veteran in favor of a non-veteran. When using numerical rating, agencies added 5 or 10 points to preference-eligible qualified candidates, depending on their disability status (OPM, 2007).

Unlike the rule of three, category rating does not use a points-based system.[4] Instead, it requires agencies to assess the quality of candidates for employment, then separate their applications into two or more categories. Veterans' Preference applies after evaluation of the applicants. Individual agency managers define and write the categories in cooperation with subject-matter experts through analysis of specific position requirements.

FIGURE 2.2.1.1 ILLUSTRATION OF CATEGORY RATING

SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE (2016, 7).
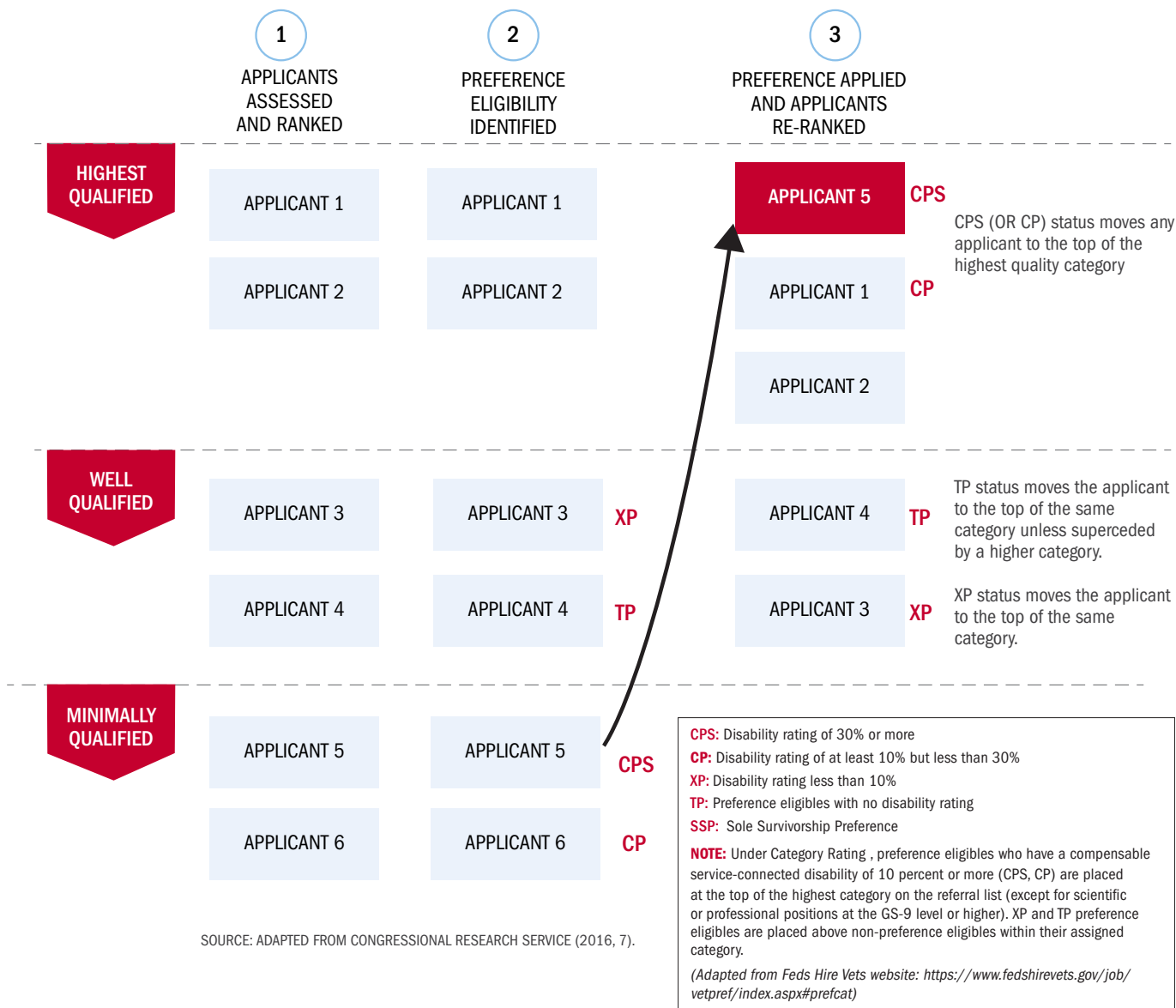
4. Although the 2010 Presidential Memorandum orders agencies not to use it, the rule of three remains in the statute governing its use (5 U.S.C. § 3318(a)), and It may be applied again in the future (MSPB, 2014). The point system is still included on OPM's Standard Form 15 (SF-15), which veterans are currently required to complete and submit to gain veterans' preference when applying. This discrepancy can be confusing for both veterans and federal employees.

As with the older system, the intent of category rating is to determine the requirements to perform a given job successfully and distinguish differences in the quality of applicants. Applicants who pass the initial screening process get assigned into categories such as "highest qualified," "well qualified," and "minimally qualified" to assess each applicant against job-related criteria. Hiring managers then make selections from the highest quality category irrespective of the number of candidates (MSPB, 2014; OPM, 2017c; OPM, 2017d). Category rating seeks to provide more than three qualified candidates from whom a hiring manager can choose to evaluate and hire. The exact categorical assignment for each applicant depends on the nature of the position and disability status. Rather than adding extra points, Veterans' Preference is now granted by listing all eligible applicants ahead of non-preference eligibles in each category. They "float to the top of the list just as in the rule of three" (MSPB 2014, 10). The example in Figure 2.2.2.1 and ensuing discussion illustrates this concept and the broader operation of category rating. It is adapted from a 2016 Congressional Research Service (CRS) report entitled *Federal Government Employment: Veterans' Preference in Competitive Examination* (see Collins, 2016). Interested readers are encouraged to consult this resource and its references for more detailed information.

As Figure 2.2.2.1 illustrates, this example involves six candidates applying for a job in the competitive service. Under category rating, they are first assigned to one of three categories—"Highest Qualified," "Well Qualified," or "Minimally Qualified"—based on job-related competencies. Next, their preference eligibility is determined. Then, based on their preference grouping, they move to the top of the category to which they were initially assigned or float to the top of the highest category. Individuals with either no disability rating—preference code TP—or a compensable service-connected disability rating of less than 10 percent—preference code XP—rise to the top of their initially assigned category. Individuals with a compensable service-connected disability rating of at least 10 percent but less than 30 percent—preference code CP—or a rating of 30 percent or more—preference code CPS—float to the top position in the highest category. If the highest quality category includes a preference-eligible—as in the example, where a CPS coded candidate occupies the top spot in the category "Highest Qualified"— "the selecting official may not select a non-preference eligible in that category without first passing over the preference eligible" (Collins, 2016, p. 8).

As further described below, passing over preference eligibles requires "[establishing] proper and adequate reasons [e.g., lack of required education or experience] to disqualify the candidate" (Collins, 2016, p. 9). Note that, unlike the points system, where preference-eligible candidates immediately receive a boost based on the nature of their eligibility, category rating initially ranks and classifies candidates without regard for their preference status. As in the points system, candidates can float to the top of the list, but not immediately. And category rating does not follow the points system's rule of three, as managers may consider the full set of candidates in the top category (with the caveat that, depending on the situation, preference eligibles will still come first).

Veterans' Preference is controversial and seems to create misunderstanding within the federal workforce. As an article in the fall 2016 edition of Issues of Merit, a quarterly publication of the Office of Policy and Evaluation at the Merit Systems Protection Board, explains (MSPB 2016, 3):

> "
> Veterans' Preference can provide an advantage to candidates who are not as qualified as others. The criteria used to place the veteran in the top category can have little or nothing to do with the quality of his or her qualifications, despite the name of the category. Once a veteran with a 10 percent or more compensable disability is deemed qualified, the agency must place the veteran in the highest quality category. For these individuals, then, "best-qualified" is assigned by operation of law, not as a result of any further assessment beyond "qualified" of the veterans' knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies, or other job-related criteria. "

The laws and regulations regarding Veterans' Preference are complicated. When administering it, agencies may face perceptions of wrongdoing and potential misconduct—whether accidental or intentional. Hiring preference varies by the individual circumstances of the veteran and the hiring authorities being used (MSPB, 2014). As a result, hiring managers and their staff may encounter a wide range of scenarios when trying to hire new employees. For example, if a preference eligible is in the highest quality category, an agency may not choose to hire a non-preference eligible unless the agency requests to pass over the preference eligible in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 3318 and the request is allowed. If there are fewer than three candidates in the highest quality category, agencies may merge the highest category with the next lower category and make selections from the combined grouping. In this scenario, preference-eligible candidates must be ranked ahead of non-preference eligible in the newly merged category (OPM, 2017d).

An agency cannot avoid or reject a preference eligible candidate who meets qualifications (and had a passing score) over a non-preference candidate. Exclusions apply when a hiring manager deems that the candidate is not qualified for an adequate reason. The rationale may include medical disqualification under 5 CFR Part 339, suitability disqualification under 5 CFR Part 731, or other reasons considered by the Office of Personnel Management or an agency under delegated examining authority to be disqualifying. In such a case, the manager may then request to reject the preference eligible candidate, except with cases related to veterans with a compensable service-connected disability of 30 percent, for which OPM becomes responsible for making the decision (OPM, 2017d). It is also important to note that Veterans' Preference does not require an agency to use a specific appointment process. Agencies typically seek to fill openings using multiple hiring authorities at the same time. According to OPM (OPM, 2017c):

> **"** Agencies have broad authority under law to hire from any appropriate source of eligibles including special appointing authorities. An agency may consider candidates already in the civil service from an agency-developed merit promotion list or it may reassign a current employee, transfer an employee from another agency, or reinstate a former Federal employee. In addition, agencies are required to give priority to displaced employees before using civil service examinations and similar hiring methods. **"**

2.2.2 SPECIAL HIRING AUTHORITIES

Category rating is part of the competitive examination process (as well as hiring into the excepted service in some cases), but a 2010 study revealed that it was used to appoint less than one-third of all new federal employees. The elaborate regulations and the labor needed to adhere to competitive examination processes may lead agencies to seek other means for onboarding new hires. Looking to other authorized hiring systems may also present opportunities for managers to consider and evaluate additional applicants. The following special hiring authorities can be used by agencies at their discretion (MSPB, 2014; OPM, 2017e). Although veterans are not entitled to be hired through these statutes and policies, they represent a valuable means for agencies to meet the goals and objectives established through the VEI.

• The Veterans Recruitment Act (VRA) is a hiring authority under 38 U.S.C. § 4214 that permits agencies to hire veterans without competition to any grade level through GS-11 or its equivalent. It can be used to hire veterans into the excepted service without issuing a vacancy announcement. Veterans' Preference applies to VRA hiring. After two years, the veteran is converted to employment in the competitive service (OPM, 2017e).

• The Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 (VEOA), as amended, is a hiring authority than can only be used when filling permanent, competitive service positions. It cannot be used to fill excepted service positions. VEOA appointments are exclusively open to so-called "status" candidates, which means "current competitive service

employees." It also enables agencies to hire preference eligible veterans for jobs that otherwise are available only to current or former government employees. VEOA does not apply to internal personnel actions such as promotions, transfers, reassignments, and reinstatements (OPM, 2017e).

- 30 Percent or More Disabled Veteran hiring authority allows managers to appoint applicants meeting this description to any position for which they are qualified, without competition. It can be used to fill permanent, temporary (not to exceed one year) or term appointments (more than one year, but not more than four) in the competitive service. There are no grade level limitations (OPM, 2017e).

- Schedule A Appointing Authority for People With Disabilities can be used to appoint eligible individuals with severe physical, psychological, or intellectual disability at any grade level or job. Though not specifically for veterans, preference applies when agencies seek to hire veterans who meet the criteria for chronic disabilities in accordance with 5 CFR 213.3102(u) (OPM, 2017e).

- Disabled Veterans Enrolled in the VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program may enroll for training or work experience under the terms of an agreement between the host agency and the VA. Under this authority, the veteran is not a federal employee but may receive a stipend from the VA. Upon successful completion, the veteran earns a Certificate of Training. The certificate enables a manager to hire the veteran to a status quo position that can be converted to a career or career-conditional appointment at any time (OPM, 2017e).

2.3 TRENDS IN FEDERAL VETERAN EMPLOYMENT

Since the VEI's inception in November 2009, employment of veterans in the federal government has grown steadily.

VETERAN HIRING

According to the latest OPM data available as of this writing (FY 2015), the data indicate a move from a low of approximately 24 percent total veteran new hires (as a proportion of total new hiring, veteran and non-veteran) in FY 2009 to a high of roughly 33 percent in FY 2015.

FIGURE 2.3.1.1 VETERAN NEW HIRES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ANNUAL NEW HIRES INTO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
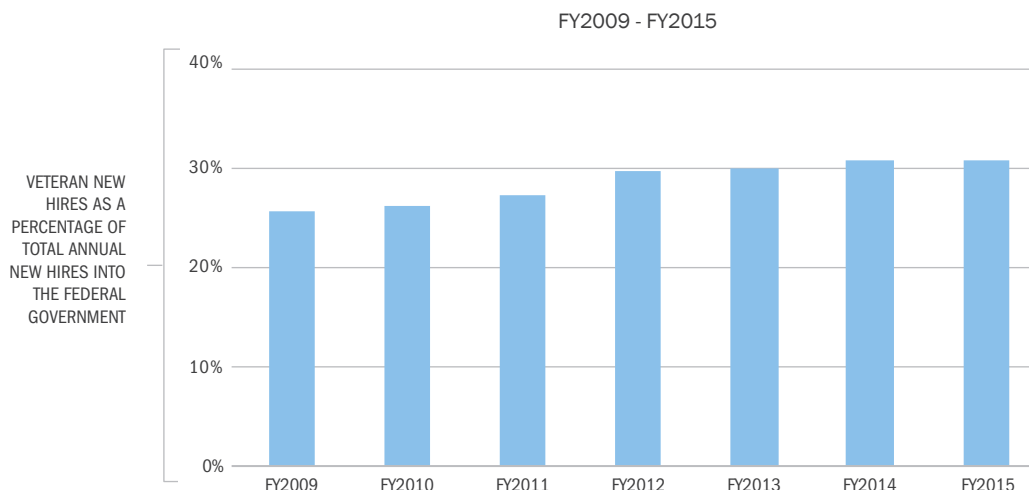
FY2009 - FY2015

Hiring of disabled veterans has also increased, from seven percent as a proportion of total new hiring in FY 2009 to 14.3 percent in FY 2015.

VETERANS ONBOARD

In addition to increases in hiring, veterans now represent nearly one-third (30.9 percent) of the more than two million employees in the federal workforce, compared to one-quarter (25.8 percent) in FY 2009 before implementation of the VEI.

FIGURE 2.3.2.1 VETERAN NEW HIRES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ANNUAL NEW HIRES INTO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

FY2009 – FY2015

VETERANS ONBOARD AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EMPLOYEES ONBOARD IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015
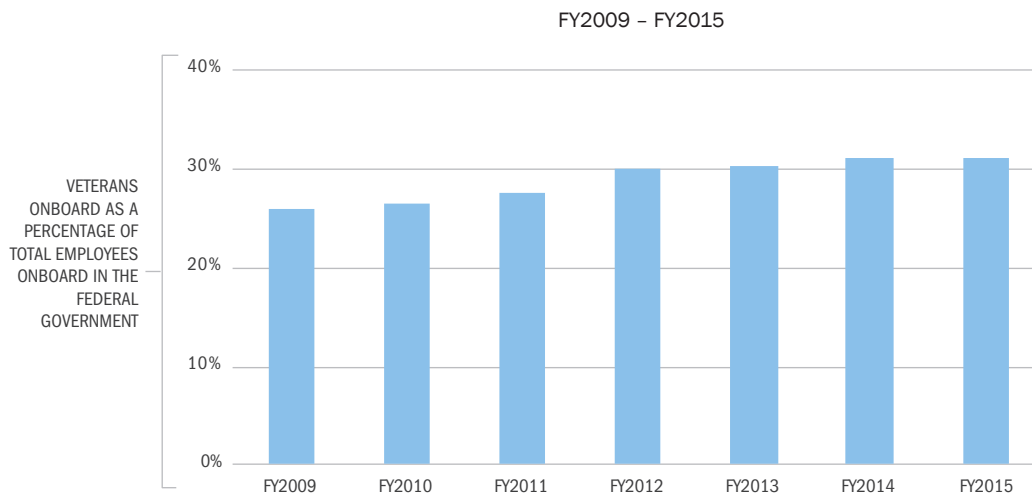
The federal government continues to experience some challenges in the area of veteran retention. It should be cautioned, however, that the data on retention are scarce—OPM only recently began reporting veteran retention figures—and there remains a concerted effort to improve retention of newly hired veterans. Retention data and trends are discussed further in Chapter Three.

IMPLEMENTATION ASSESSMENT OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 13518—THE VETERANS EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

THE VETERANS EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE—FORMATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND OUTCOMES

▪ 3.1 HISTORY OF EXECUTIVE ORDER AND VEI FORMATION

The VEI is a product of bipartisan political cooperation, interagency collaboration, and the constructive action of a small group of committed leaders. Before enactment of the VEI, President Obama and VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, a retired Army general, had identified addressing widespread unemployment among veterans as a top priority. Recalling this period, the former director of OPM explained the vision behind the initiative (personal communication, October 6, 2016):

> "When we took on the OPM job at the beginning of the Obama administration, the unemployment rate for veterans across the board, especially veterans who'd been in the Middle East, was higher than it should have been. That was a significant challenge both the president and I thought we could turn around. What we agreed to do in discussions with the White House was that ultimately, to create the number of jobs necessary to solve this problem, you'd have to involve the private sector, but before we could effectively reach out and approach the private sector and ask them to step up and do a more wholesome job, the feeling was we had to get our own federal house in order because the federal government at the time was a polyglot of responses in this area."

To begin addressing this challenge, the OPM director tasked an OPM deputy associate director and a GS-14 career employee to create a Veterans Wolfpack to lead the interagency effort. The two-person team engaged with senior-level personnel from the departments of Defense, Labor, Veterans Affairs, Commerce, Homeland Security, Treasury, Transportation, and other agencies to leverage their collective expertise. In early July 2009, the OPM Director convened the group for a two-day strategic planning session at OPM's Eastern Management Development Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. During the meeting in Shepherdstown, the agency representatives recognized that senior-level leadership would be a key component for meeting the overarching goal of the Obama administration to boost veterans' employment in the federal government. A pressing concern was to identify a way to ensure full participation by all 24 agencies that would participate in what would become the VEI. Some of the large federal agencies, such as the VA, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Homeland Security, had already implemented several in-house programs related to veteran employment. Based on this experience, the VA's representative pushed strongly for a presidential executive

order to provide credibility, support, and the commitment of adequate resources. As this individual explained (personal communication, July 12, 2016):

> **"**...these kinds of initiatives can die on the fire very quickly unless you get commitment from the agency heads, and to get that you're going to need some muscle. I raised my hand, and I said, "Look, let's do an executive order.**"**

After the two-day session, the OPM Director established an official interagency working group led by the OPM representatives. The group worked through the summer and fall of 2009 to develop a draft of the executive order. According to the VA representative (personal communication, July 12, 2016):

> **"**In those months, we were working to get that draft together and then to get sign-offs. Because the important thing here that I learned, honestly, and the staff there learned, is you really can't just simply put an executive order in front of the president and then have it signed. You've got to go through a coordinated interagency process to get drafts of this executive order in front of a number of departments and agencies to sign off.**"**

Building an infrastructure to operationalize the VEI was a complicated undertaking. Executive Order 13171, "Hispanics Employment in the Federal Government," signed by President Bill Clinton in 2000, was proposed as a framework to emulate because several of the group members were familiar with how it had led to gradual improvement with meeting its objectives (OPM, 2015). The agency employment program offices—created by the executive order and run under the auspices of the VEI centralized offices addressing veterans' employment issues—an interagency council to guide the overall policy, and a series of priorities that focused on meeting performance measurement standards were based on Clinton's order.

In addition to an executive order, a common view among all those interviewed for the study was the need to formulate a comprehensive approach to design, implement, and manage the initiative. Accordingly, as the presidential order to create the VEI was taking shape, OPM and the working group also drafted "The Government-wide Veterans' Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan for FY 2010-FY 2012." Released to the public in January 2010, this plan envisioned meeting the VEI's goals by focusing on four areas: leadership commitment, skills development and employment, a targeted marketing campaign to veterans and transitioning service members, and the creation of an information gateway to communicate with veterans, human resources professionals, and hiring officials. Strategic planning meshes objective analysis with subjective assessment of goals, priorities, and values to chart a future course of action. By adopting a big picture approach to the design, implementation, and management of the VEI, the working group set up a process that would commit each agency leader to reaching a set of defined goals. This has been a universally applied process for all federal agencies since enactment of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (Poister 2010).

The VEI requires all federal agencies to develop and apply their own procedures to align with the government-wide strategy, which seeks to build upon programs already in place. Such plans, however, run the risk of being reduced to symbolic roles if they are not accompanied by a mechanism to promote organizational consensus and commitment around deliberate aims (Abdallah & Langley, 2014). A clear understanding of purpose, goals, roles, and action steps is more likely to emerge over time as connections are made within the emerging network and the people involved (Innes & Booher, 2010, Mintzberg et.al, 2009). According to several interviewees, it was crucial to take advantage of the momentum and commitment of large agencies with well-established programs for veterans (namely DOD, DHS, DOL, DOT,

and VA), come up with a plan for stakeholder engagement, and ensure that the management of the initiative was led by executive-level personnel. As one of the OPM co-leaders described (personal communication, May 17, 2016):

> **❝** We figured out early on that OPM as a tiny agency with limited resources would need some bigger players to get something really going. So, we reached out to people at the VA transition office, at DOD, Department of Labor VETS, Homeland Security, and some other agencies that were doing well, because we got all the data on who was hiring the most veterans and that sort of thing, and brought all these people together. **❞**

Committed managers focus on engaging their organization and its people on a journey that integrates decision-making with coordinating mechanisms (Mintzberg, 1994). Strategic plans do not operate through a single mechanism, but through many institutions with complex dynamics (Bryson, Hamilton Edwards, & Van Slyke, 2017). Thus, an ongoing challenge with the VEI was how to direct agencies and their leaders with fragmented interests and competing perspectives toward a common direction (Albrechts & Balducci, 2013). Real transformation takes time and dedication and therefore risks losing momentum if there are no short-term goals to meet and actions to celebrate (Kotter, 1996, 2008 as cited in Albrechts & Balducci, 2013). One former OPM official, following the lead of the Obama administration and some of the larger agencies, initiated a broad change in management approach. According to one former OPM and DOL senior manager (personal communication, October 12, 2016):

> **❝** One of the first things that he [the former OPM official] talked about that he wanted to do was he wanted to increase the number of veterans that were hired in the federal government. He said he'd been looking at the data and it was so-so, but there seemed like there should be a stronger effort around making sure that our service members are getting employed. If we do this in the federal government and set the standard, this will be a trickle-down effect to corporate, private industry, other businesses to consider that these veterans have all these talents. We should be bringing them in and having them work. **❞**

Once the VEI was established, the working group members became a steering committee that assisted the Council on Veterans Employment, an interagency body comprised of representatives from the federal government's 24 largest departments and agencies that would provide the VEI with overall vision and strategic direction. The steering committee identified the principal barriers to cross-agency collaboration and implementation of improvements in veterans' employment, and generated ideas about the most effective leadership arrangement for the VEI as an interagency initiative.

■ **3.2** LEADERSHIP AND COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT

Due to the president's giving the VEI a high priority, several steering committee members pushed strongly for the council to be chaired by Vice President Joseph R. Biden. A number of interviewees expressed that gaining the full support and involvement of the vice president would maintain leadership of the initiative at the highest level. According to an OPM leader, this would not only facilitate a direct line of communication to the White House and the president but would also allow for incoming political administrations to set an agenda based on their own goals and objectives (personal communication, May 17, 2016).

Although leadership of the council by the vice president was considered, a decision was made for the council to be co-chaired by the secretaries of Labor and Veterans Affairs, with the director of OPM serving as vice chair. As a VA member of the steering committee explained (personal communication, July 12, 2016):

> **"** ...both of these departments already had significant programs around veterans' employment, and the missions of these agencies were already focused on employment, and employment of veterans specifically. **"**

Participation in policy formulation is an especially meaningful step through which administrators can make an impact in shaping public policy (Roman, 2017). Presidents and their appointees seek to distribute programs and their intended aims through federal agencies by proposing new programs or shifting how resources are allocated across and within existing programs (Berry, Burden, & Howell, 2010; Heclo 2011; Hudak, 2014). The design and implementation of the VEI involved participation by a number of senior-level political appointees, with support from steering committee members deeply versed in veteran-related programs and policies. Based on their expertise and experience, steering committee members consistently stressed that the VEI needed top-level political support to foster interagency collaboration. And while the vice president did not serve as chair of the council, one individual on the committee expressed that the VEI benefited from a rare "alignment of the stars," with the president, vice president, Michelle Obama, and Dr. Jill Biden focused intently on veterans issues through programs like Joining Forces (personal communication, July 12, 2016).

To harness this attention and energy, the committee pushed for the council to meet quarterly to monitor each agency's progress. The council's first meeting was held in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. Present Obama attended and strongly communicated his directive that the VEI should be personally led by the senior leadership of each agency, and he reinforced the need for strong leadership at a subsequent 2011 meeting (which, as described in Chapter 4, helped forestall concerns over waning leadership attention).

FIGURE 3.2.1 COUNCIL ON VETERANS EMPLOYMENT MEETING, JUNE 30, 2011

Vice President Biden and Senior Advisor to the President Valerie Jarrett participated in a follow-up meeting soon after (personal communication, November 19, 2016). According to several committee members and the former OPM director, political leadership of the VEI was a key factor for reaching out to stakeholders within government, the nonprofit community, and the private sector (personal communication, January 20, 2017).

The term "stakeholders" refers broadly to individuals, groups, or organizations that can affect an organization's objectives, resources, and outputs or are affected by such (Bryson, 1995; Freeman, 1984), and in the case of the VEI included a panoply of actors across the federal government, nonprofits, and private for-profit organizations. These actors have traditionally operated in clearly defined sectors with separate boundaries and strategies, but over the past two to three decades strategic thinking has shifted toward defining ways in which the sectors connect and complement one another through shared goals and organizational models. For policy initiatives such as the VEI, developing coalitions and partnerships provides a way to build capacity through expertise and public engagement (Emerson & Gerlak, 2014). Early efforts focused on leveraging the political influence of the president and engaging with military members and their families through initiatives such as Joining Forces and the Veteran Jobs Mission (formerly The 100,000 Jobs Mission).

Building on its commitment for the federal government to lead the nationwide effort to employ veterans, the VEI focused its first phase on increasing the number of veterans hired annually at each of the initiative's 24 participating agencies. The sheer magnitude of the VEI, however, would prove to be a major challenge. Implementation planning typically incorporates input from stakeholders who have a vested interest in a policy's course of action. It requires a shared vision and commitment, with government agencies acting as organizers, facilitators, and capacity-builders—whether directing, powering, or staying out of the way (Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2014). Fundamentally, the way government policy initiatives are led and managed influences the degree of implementation difficulty or success (Coe, 1998). Knowing this, the steering committee and the council developed a governance process to hold agencies accountable. This process centered on establishing a system to measure and hold agencies accountable for performance in employing veterans, with an initial emphasis on hiring. The system aimed to quantify agency efforts toward improving veteran employment, provide benchmarks for gauging progress, and identify successes and ongoing challenges.

3.3 AGENCY PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

The council introduced the VEI's first performance measurement system in FY 2010. Aligning with the initial focus on hiring, this first system measured how many total veterans and how many disabled veterans participating agencies hired as percentages of their overall annual new hires (comprised of veterans and non-veterans). Treating each agency's FY 2010 percentage as a baseline, the system set annual hiring goals as a function of FY 2010 performance, using performance ranges designated by a green-yellow-red coloring arrangement. The system put agencies in the green, yellow, or red zone if, respectively, their total and disabled veteran new hires comprised 20 percent or more, between 10 and 20 percent, or less than 10 percent of their overall annual new hires in FY 2010. By zone, the system then assigned agencies goals to increase their annual veteran hiring percentages by specific amounts or, for the highest performers, to maintain their percentages and take certain other steps (e.g., increase use of special hiring authorities) to promote veteran employment.

Current Percentage of Veteran New Hires (Total Hires and Disabled Hires)		FY 2011/FY 2012 Recommended Percentage Point Increase for Veteran New Hires and Other Actions	
		Total Veteran New Hires	Total Disabled Veteran New Hires
Above 25% (Total Veteran New Hires only)		Maintain or improve current percentage; analyze Veterans demographics and establish targeted recruitment efforts for women, homeless, and/or combat enlisted Veterans, individual eligible for derived Veterans' preference, and military spouses; and increase the use of special hiring authorities for Veterans	
20-24.99%		1 - 2 percentage points	Maintain levels
10-19.99%		3 - 4 percentage points	1 - 2 percentage points
Below 10%		5 - 6 percentage points	2 - 3 percentage points

While this system made meaningful strides toward benchmarking performance and aligning departments' and agencies' performance outcomes with clear, specific goals, it had a number of drawbacks. For example, in emphasizing hiring to the exclusion of other metrics—including veterans onboard and, importantly, department and agency performance on retention of veterans—some argued the initial system reduced veteran employment to simply chasing and continuously increasing a hiring number rather than accounting for the fuller employment picture. Moreover, in setting hiring performance baselines against the most recent fiscal year's numbers (those from FY 2010), the system did not account for agencies being measured against unusually high veteran new hiring percentages. In other words, if an agency did an abnormally high amount of hiring—including veteran hiring—in FY 2010, its subsequent performance would be benchmarked against this standard rather than its performance in a typical fiscal year. And for agencies that already hired significant numbers of veterans on a year-over-year basis, the system still set goals that could be difficult to achieve. Finally, some argued the restrictive budget environment in which the system was implemented made consistent increases in annual hiring percentages unrealistic.

To address these issues, in FY 2015 the council introduced a new system, dubbed the Veterans Employment Performance Model. The intent of the system was to give council leaders a more holistic picture of the veteran employment situation and provide a mechanism for carrying out clearer performance reviews.

3.3.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SYSTEM AND PROCESS

The Veteran Employment Model, drawing from the original performance measurement system, aims to deliver a more comprehensive evaluation of agency outcomes. The system focuses on four measures: veteran new hires, disabled veteran new hires, veterans onboard, and veteran retention. In addition, for measurement purposes the system categorizes agencies into one of four groups, depending upon number of employees, to account for differences in organizational size that could influence performance outcomes.

Based on its measures and grouping approach, the new system assigns each department or agency a score on a 1 to 4 scale—4 equal to exemplary (EX), 3 to highly effective (HE), 2 to effective (E), and 1 to needs improvement (NI)—with scores a function of performance relative to a department's or agency's group average (with the exception of retention). The system then applies a weighting procedure, multiplying the 1 to 4 scores on each measure by a percentage and adding the subsequent figures to arrive at a composite score on the four-point scale. Groupings, measurements, and scoring methods are further described below.

3.3.2 DEPARTMENT AND AGENCY GROUPINGS

Based on number of employees, the 24 departments and agencies under the VEI are grouped as follows for measuring performance:

TABLE 3.3.2.1 DEPARTMENT AND AGENCY GROUPINGS

GROUP 1	AGENCY	GROUP 2	AGENCY
<20k	Education Energy HUD Labor State AID SBA EPA GSA NASA NSF OPM NRC	>20k - 100k	Commerce HHS Interior Transportation SSA
		GROUP 3	**AGENCY**
		>100k - 250k	Agriculture Homeland Security Justice Treasury
		GROUP 4	**AGENCY**
		>250k	Defense Veterans Affairs

As shown in the table, the less than 20,000 employees group includes the most departments and agencies, with fewer in each of the larger groups.

3.3.3 DEFINITIONS OF PERFORMANCE MEASURES

For measurement purposes, "veteran new hires" is defined as the percentage of veterans (disabled and non-disabled) hired relative to overall annual new hires (exclusive of transfers between agencies). Similarly, "disabled veteran new hires" is defined as the percentage of disabled veterans hired relative to overall annual new hires (exclusive of transfers between agencies). "Veterans onboard" is defined as the percentage of total veterans (disabled and non-disabled) employed relative to the total number of employees in the federal workforce. "Veteran retention" is defined as the percentage of veterans (disabled and non-disabled) still employed at the end of a given fiscal year relative to the total number of veterans hired two years before that year (e.g., the FY 2015 retention rate would be the percentage of veterans hired in FY 2013 still employed in FY 2015, relative to the total number of veterans hired in FY 2013).

3.3.4 SCORING METHOD

Using annual data on veteran new hiring, veterans onboard, and veteran retention, departments and agencies receive composite performance scores measured on the 1 to 4 point scale. This composite score is calculated in two steps. First, each department and agency receives a 1 to 4 score for each of the four measures gauging new hiring, onboard, and retention percentages. Then, each department's and agency's scores on the individual measures are combined using a weighting procedure that produces a composite score. Composite scores of 3.5 to 4.0 are classified as exemplary (EX), 2.75 to 3.49 as highly effective (HE), 2.00 to 2.74 as effective (E), and 1.00 to 1.99 as needs improvement (NI).

3.3.5 STEP 1 – DETERMINING SCORES ON INDIVIDUAL MEASURES

For each of total veteran new hires, disabled veteran new hires, and veterans onboard, departments and agencies receive 1 to 4 scores based on how their percentages compare to the group average percentage on veteran hiring or veterans onboard. On each of these measures, they receive a 4-exemplary (EX) if their percentage exceeds the group average by two or more percentage points, a 3-highly effective (HE) if their percentage exceeds the group average by more than one but less than two percentage points, a 2-effective (E) if their percentage exceeds the group average by one or less percentage points, and a 1-needs improvement (NI) if their percentage falls below the average. A department or agency may also receive an automatic exemplary (EX) rating on veteran hiring if it meets or exceeds 25 percent, on disabled veteran hiring if it meets or exceeds 10 percent, and on veterans onboard if it meets or exceeds 25 percent.

For veteran retention, departments and agencies receive 1 to 4 scores based on how their veteran retention percentages compare to their own non-veteran retention percentages (and not, in this case, to the group average for veterans per se). They receive a 4-exemplary (EX) if their veteran retention percentage is five or less percentage points below their non-veteran retention percentage, a 3-highly effective (HE) if their veteran retention percentage is less than eight but more than five percentage points below their non-veteran retention percentage, a 2-effective (E) if their veteran retention percentage is less than 10 but more than eight percentage points below their non-veteran retention percentage, and a 1-needs improvement if their percentage is 10 or more percentage points below their non-veteran retention percentage.

3.3.6 STEP 2 – DETERMINING COMPOSITE SCORES

Based on their scores on the individual hiring, onboard, and retention measures, departments and agencies receive a composite score calculated through weighting each individual score by a percentage and then adding the individual weighted-scores together. Total veteran new hiring and disabled veteran new hiring scores receive 40 percent weight, veterans onboard receives 10 percent weight, and veteran retention receives 10 percent weight.

3.3.7 EXAMPLE CALCULATION

Suppose an individual department's or agency's veteran employment performance relative to its group average, or in the case of retention its own non-veteran retention rate, is as follows:

Agency Total New Veteran Hiring	=	20.0%
Group Average Total Veteran New Hiring	=	15.0%
Agency Disabled Veteran New Hiring	=	6.0%
Group Average Disabled Veteran New Hiring	=	5.0%
Agency Veterans Onboard	=	11.5%
Group Average Veterans Onboard	=	10.0%
Agency Veteran New Hire Retention	=	70.0%
Agency Non-Veteran New Hire Retention	=	85.0%

Based on these numbers, the agency would receive the following scores: 4 for total veteran new hiring (as the agency percentage exceeds the group average by two or more percentage points); 2 for disabled veteran new hiring (as the agency percentage exceeds the group average by one or less percentage points); 3 for veterans onboard (as the agency percentage exceeds the group average by more than one but less than two percentage points); and 1 for veteran retention (as the agency's veteran new hire retention rate lags its non-veteran new hire retention rate by more than 10 percentage points). Applying the weights to each individual score, the agency's composite score would be:

Agency Composite Score	=	(4*0.4)+(2*0.4)+(3*0.1)+(1*0.1)
Agency Composite Score	=	2.8

Based on the established ratings levels, this agency's performance would be considered highly effective, as its composite score falls in the HE range of 2.75 to 3.49.

■ 3.4 AGENCY PERFORMANCE

Examination of agency-level performance underpinning broader, federal-wide trends reveals considerable variation in veteran employment outcomes—across individual agencies and the agency groupings established under the VEI's updated performance measurement system. The following presentation of agency-level performance outcomes draws on data from OPM's recurring Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government report, an annual report containing data on veteran hiring, veterans onboard, and veteran retention rates at the 24 agencies. The presentation focuses on outcomes from the FY 2015 report, which, as of this study, contains OPM's latest available data and is the first year the VEI's new performance measurement system went into effect. The breakdown of the FY 2015 data is a sample of the study's broader analysis of agency-level trends from FY 2009 to FY 2015. Appendix F contains scorecards presenting the full analysis of veteran hiring, veterans' onboard, and veteran retention performance at each of the VEI's 24 agencies over the FY 2009-FY 2015 time period.

3.4.1 VETERAN HIRING

FIGURE 3.4.1.1 AGENCY VETERAN NEW HIRES SCORES FY2015

Group 1 Agency
Veteran New Hires Scores - FY2015
Agencies with <20k employees

Group 2 Agency
Veteran New Hires Scores - FY2015
Agencies with >20k - 100k employees

Group 3 Agency
Veteran New Hires Scores - FY2015
Agencies with >100k - 250k employeess

Group 4 Agency
VeteranNew Hires Scores - FY2015
Agencies with >250k employees

FIGURE 3.4.1.2 AGENCY DISABLED VETERAN NEW HIRES SCORES FY2015

Group 1 Agency
Disabled Veteran New Hires Scores - FY2015
Agencies with <20k employees

Group 2 Agency
Disabled Veteran New Hires Scores - FY2015
Agencies with >20k - 100k employees

Group 3 Agency
Disabled Veteran New Hires Scores - FY2015
Agencies with >100k - 250k employeess

Group 4 Agency
Disabled Veteran New Hires Scores - FY2015
Agencies with >250k employees

3.4.2 VETERANS ONBOARD

FIGURE 3.4.2.1 AGENCY VETERANS ONBOARD SCORES FY2015

Group 1 Agency
Total Veterans Onboard Scores - FY2015

Agencies with <20k employees

Group 2 Agency
Total Veterans Onboard Scores - FY2015

Agencies with >20k - 100k employees

Group 3 Agency
Total Veterans Onboard Scores - FY2015

Agencies with >100k - 250k employeess

Group 4 Agency
Total Veterans Onboard Scores - FY2015

Agencies with >250k employees
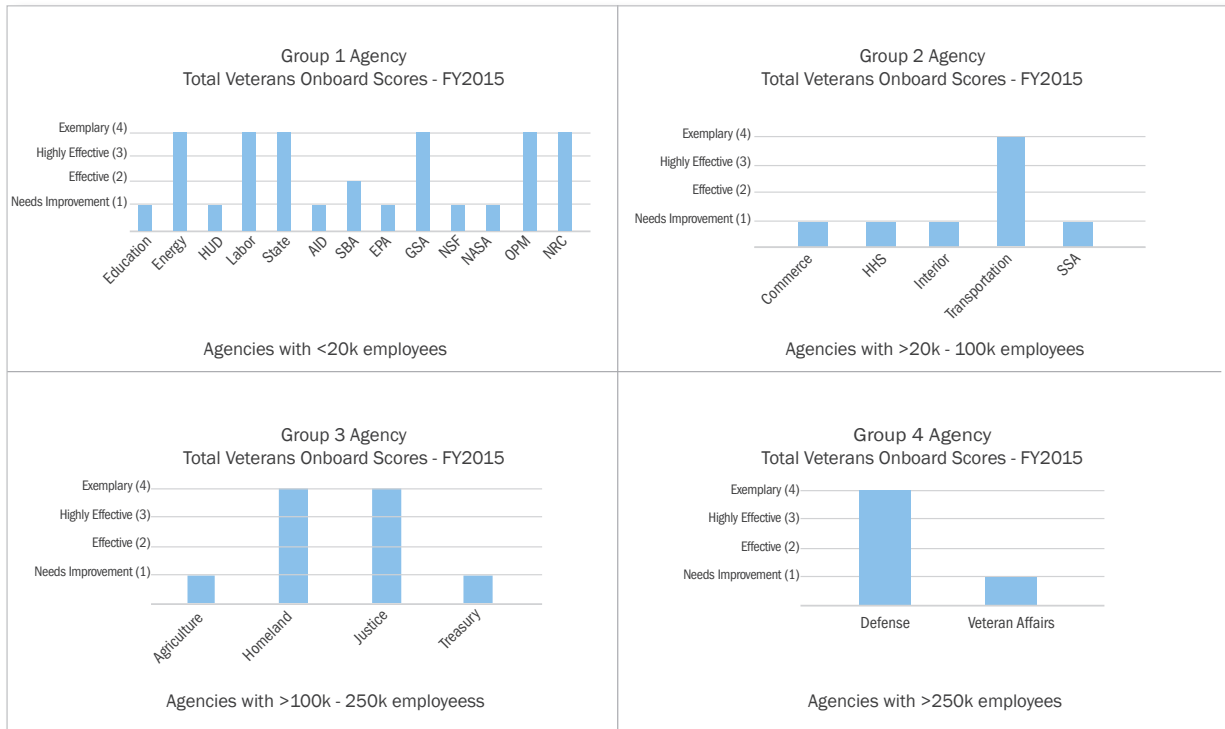
3.4.3 VETERAN RETENTION

FIGURE 3.4.3.1 AGENCY VETERAN RETENTION SCORES FY2015

Group 1 Agency
Veteran Retention Scores - FY2015

Agencies with <20k employees

Group 2 Agency
Veteran Retention Scores - FY2015

Agencies with >20k - 100k employees

Group 3 Agency
Veteran Retention Scores - FY2015

Agencies with >100k - 250k employeess

Group 4 Agency
Veteran Retention Scores - FY2015

Agencies with >250k employees
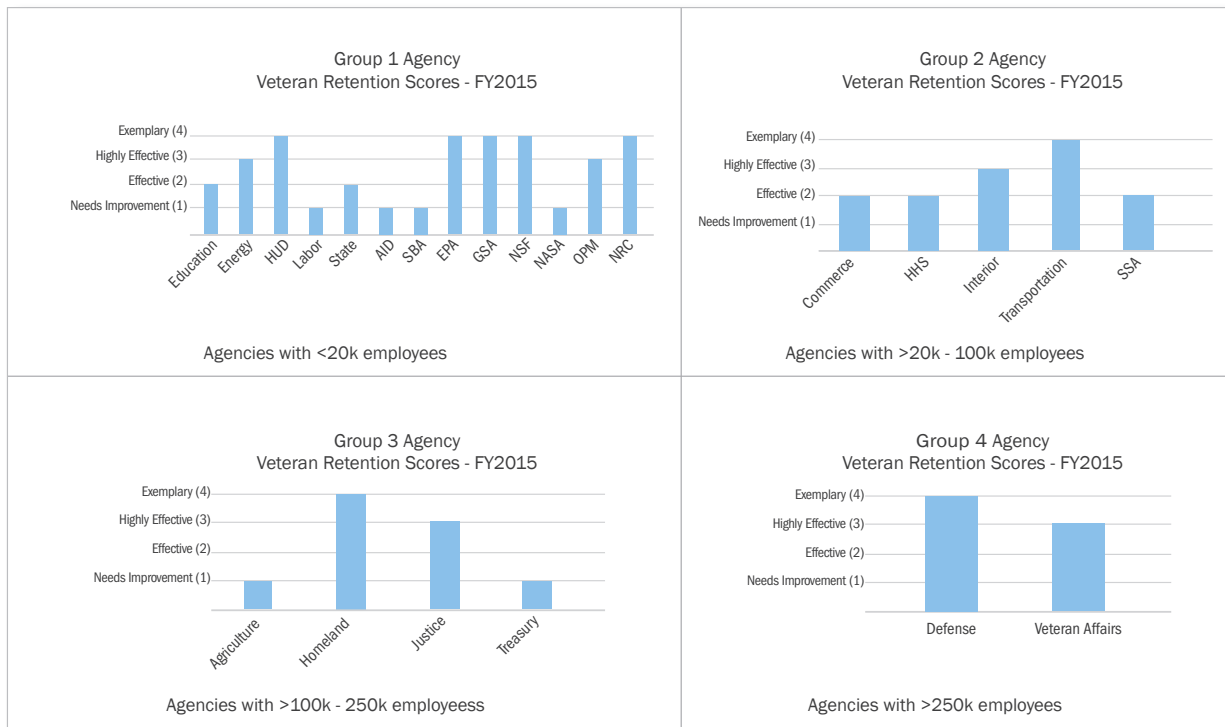
3.4.4 VETERAN EMPLOYMENT PERFORMANCE COMPOSITE SCORES

FIGURE 3.4.4.1 AGENCY COMPOSITE PERFORMANCE SCORES FY2015

Group 1 Agency
Composite Performance Score - FY2015

Agencies with <20k employees

Group 2 Agency
Composite Performance Score - FY2015

Agencies with >20k - 100k employees

Group 3 Agency
Composite Performance Score - FY2015

Agencies with >100k - 250k employeess

Group 4 Agency
Composite Performance Score - FY2015

Agencies with >250k employees

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VETERANS EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

◼ 4.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter assesses the initiative's implementation during the Obama administration. Based solely on the goal of increasing veteran hiring, the data suggest the VEI has been a significant success. As shown in Chapter Three, veterans made up roughly 33 percent of new federal hires in FY 2015, compared to a low of 24 percent in FY 2009. In addition, regarding employees onboard, veterans now comprise nearly one-third (30.9 percent) of the more than two million employees in the federal workforce (compared to one quarter in FY 2009; see OPM 2016c). Many agencies are also retaining newly hired veterans at rates near those of their non-veteran employees.

These results are encouraging, but continued success is not guaranteed. Moreover, as shown in the previous chapter, shifting from federal-wide to agency-level data reveals notable underlying variation in agencies' efforts to employ veterans. Such varying results suggest important differences in agencies' experiences implementing the VEI, as well as valuable insights to be gleaned from further investigation.

Drawing from a combination of in-depth interviews and survey data, this chapter presents a series of key findings on the VEI's leadership, governance structure, performance measurement, and agency-level implementation dynamics. The interviews capture insights from more than a dozen individuals intimately involved in the VEI's design and implementation—including leaders at OPM and agencies ranging from DOD and VA to DHS, Labor, Education, USAID, and NSF—as well as a broader set of stakeholders and subject matter experts on veterans' employment issues. The survey data reflect perceptions of federal chief human capital officers, hiring managers, and front-line veteran employees regarding the operation and efficacy of the VEI, the Veterans' Preference, and the presence and impact of veterans in the federal workplace. The findings are organized into three major categories: policy governance and leadership, agency-level implementation and perceptions, and issues of cross-sector engagement and learning on veterans' employment across the federal government and the private sector.

◼ 4.2 POLICY GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Policy governance is the method or system through which an organization implements a logical course of action to achieve its stated goals (Carver & Carver, 2001). Executive Order 13518 lays out the broad process through which the VEI is to be implemented, along with several clearly stated policy objectives. The Council on Veterans Employment also

published two versions (in 2010 and 2014) of the "Government-wide Veterans Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan." Beyond specific employment goals (e.g., hiring percentage targets), both plans articulate key areas related to leadership, marketing, information sharing and dissemination, skills translation and development, and alignment with other government initiatives related to workforce planning, diversity, and inclusion. The plans also emphasize that the federal government is a progressive and diverse employer with numerous high-demand occupations that require the need for focused recruitment by agencies to meet their mission objectives.

As of this assessment, the council and steering committee have addressed each of these aims; however, many remain partially realized. Our interviews and survey data reveal key leaders' awareness that the VEI's broader strategic aims vary in the degree to which they have been realized. Under policy governance and leadership, the data point to four specific findings.

4

4.2.1 NEED FOR SUSTAINED POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

FINDING: At its outset, the Council on Veterans Employment and the steering committee provided the VEI with strong, committed leadership required for implementing a program of such large scale and scope. Over time, however, progress and momentum toward achieving VEI goals waned due to inconsistent participation by senior-level officials.

Interviews with key insiders revealed that the small group of government officials and chief human capital officers who planned and designed the VEI were highly committed and focused, with a planning process that clearly supported the policy aims of the president. The policy framers' original vision had the vice president serving as council chair to convey a firm commitment to the VEI's success (personal communication, May 17, 2016). This arrangement did not make the final version of the executive order, but the council's first co-chairs—Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki and Department of Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, along with Office of Personnel Management Director John Berry (deputy chair)—were widely viewed as instrumental to setting the VEI's initial direction and generating momentum. Moreover, the VEI steering committee was set up to include political appointees—for example, assistant secretaries focused on human capital and management issues—with the requisite authority to commit their agencies to courses of action arrived at during committee deliberations.

Whereas the VEI's aims are relatively straightforward, the steering committee anticipated several factors that would complicate their ability to drive policy implementation. One principal complicating factor is the sheer size of the executive branch, comprised of approximately 1.8 million employees within the White House and across the federal agencies and departments (OPM 2016d). Diversity in federal agencies and their respective workforces cannot be overstated. Agency sizes range from nearly 700,000 working in various components of the Department of Defense to almost 375,000 at the Department of Veterans Affairs to approximately 4,400 working at the Department of Education, and each of these agencies contains its own divisions that are further split into departments and program offices. As one former VA official put it (personal communication, July 12, 2016):

> Government is really a combination of different moving parts with different agendas and different schedules and so forth. You've got to appreciate that when you do something like [VEI]. If you're looking for something that's going to operate within one department that's one thing. If you're looking to do something that is interagency, or government-wide, it's a totally different methodology.

On individual department or agency programs versus interagency initiatives, this individual went on:

> **"** The difference between an interagency or government-wide initiative like this, and a program within an individual department, is that a program in an individual department [has] staff assigned to it, you have regulations and policies, you have a budget, right? You create this program, which at some point is self-sustaining. Interagency or government-wide are not inherently self-sustaining. That's why leadership is so important, and that's why the infrastructure that you're getting the people together in to hold them accountable is so important. **"**

TABLE 4.2.1.1 DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES BY SIZE FY2016 (LATEST AVAILABLE DATA AS OF THIS WRITING)

AGENCY	ALL EMPLOYEES ONBOARD	VETERANS ONBOARD
Defense	687,435	326,529
Veterans Affairs	373,152	122,357
Homeland Security	191,644	53,129
Justice	116,530	29,166
Agriculture	96,595	12,484
Treasury	92,109	10,203
HHS	86,552	6,478
Interior	71,057	12,127
SSA	64,394	10,478
Transportation	55,172	20,249
Commerce	46,012	5,566
NASA	17,251	2,078
Labor	15,749	3,422
EPA	15,636	1,364
State	13,126	2,745
Energy	12,230	2,866
GSA	11,552	2,571
HUD	8,000	1,238
OPM	5,358	1,413
Education	4,362	475
SBA	3,815	670
NRC	3,521	735
AID	1,731	249
NSF	1,455	123

Within the federal bureaucracy, implementation authority is fragmented and dispersed over a vast array of players within separate agencies, complicating policy coordination, management activity, and leadership (Wilson, 1989). The basic logic concerning implementation is that making a program work effectively depends on collaborative action by multiple organizations. Agencies in the executive branch do not share the same mission, but are all linked to political authority as well as to administrative hierarchy. Competing priorities, turf battles, and partisan differences can exacerbate implementation tensions (Peters, 2014). All of these factors complicate interagency coordination.

Federal veterans' programs, like many others, face problems related to overlap and duplication, whereby multiple agencies and programs engage in similar strategies and activities to provide the same intended services or outcomes (GAO, 2016). For example, a 2014 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office identified 170 separate programs within the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs that address the effects of combat, assist with civilian transition and readjustment, or seek to raise civilians' public awareness for both areas (GAO, 2014). Another report found that the Department of Labor should do more to coordinate its Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program with DOD and VA and that each department should support overall employment services for veterans (GAO, 2013).

For agency and program leaders to successfully implement a new program such as the VEI, they needed to look beyond their organizational boundaries to develop colleagues and allies in other agencies who can solve problems (Radin, 1996). Interagency coordination was a common challenge, so, as one senior DOL official expressed, to meet the aims of the VEI it was critical to set up a coordinating body "to shape a collective approach to veterans' issues" (personal communication, January 20, 2017). The steering committee proved critically important in this regard, convening frequently during the beginning of the initiative, even when the council had not met for several months (personal communication, July 12, 2016).

Although the steering committee remained integral to sustaining and advancing the aims of the VEI, and the initial council leadership was strong, leadership efforts did eventually wane (especially after 2013). Maintaining senior political appointee engagement took considerable pressure at times, including the involvement of the president on at least one occasion. The former OPM director, recalling a period when agency attention had started to decline due to a lack of senior leader attentiveness and intervention, described his decision to "ring the alarm bell with the White House," warning that the program could backslide without the President's personal intervention (personal communication, October 6, 2016). The personal intervention of the OPM Director to garner high-level political support led to improved short-term commitment by most senior-level agency executives and their subordinates to the goals established by the presidential administration and the council.

Nonetheless, council meetings, intended to be quarterly, eventually slipped to only once or twice per year. Over time, senior career-level employees (GS-13 through GS-15), rather than political appointees called for in the executive order, began representing agencies. Participation in some cases shifted from political appointees to career civil servants without sufficient authority or access to effectuate policy and management changes in their organizations. In the words of one former DHS official (personal communication, August 18, 2016):

> **"** ...it [became] extremely hard to get the senior leadership to actually attend these meetings and then to truly co-chair. So almost immediately it was defaulted down to what I would call the HR directors. **"**

In addition to this problem, in certain cases agencies were not consistently or actively represented—by either a political appointee or a senior member of the civil service. For example, according to a political appointee at the Department of Education (personal communication, July 25, 2016):

> **"**...there hasn't been a lot of historical continuity in this and I just assumed that someone else in our team was running with this initiative. I didn't realize that we've been basically absent from the proceedings, and so...I set out to try to rectify that by being really engaged and bringing more of our leadership team into the conversation about the work at the [council].**"**

Comparing career-level staff and political appointee engagement, the career staff typically possess high levels of institutional expertise but lack the executive authority appointees do to carry out the directives of the council. Thus, as career-level staff came to replace political appointees as agency representatives to the VEI's governing bodies, considerable momentum was lost. According to its senior leaders, OPM is now in the process of reassessing the VEI's future focus areas to determine how to proceed with refining its overall approach. Several interviewees emphasized that OPM has limited authority to move the VEI through the federal bureaucracy on its own. Executive orders are not automatic by nature; their implementation depends on the willingness of agency leaders and their subordinates to set them into motion (Kennedy, 2014).

Furthermore, the ability of agency leaders to carry out the VEI's directives are impacted by the complex interplay between policy implementation and politics, with each shaping the other over time. As a result, engaging stakeholders and acquiring political support are necessary to ensure effective management of the initiative (Moynihan & Soss, 2014; Soss, Hacker, & Mettler, 2007). Sustaining political support within the White House, alongside engagement by agency heads and their deputies, will be critical to safeguarding the VEI's initial successes and realizing its long-term aims at improving performance. In contemplating the council's future, a number of interviewees returned to the idea of having the vice president be the chair rather than maintain the co-chair arrangement. According to an OPM official (personal communication, May 17, 2016):

> **"**...I think they should restructure the executive order and put the council under direction, or under the chairmanship of the vice president. I still think that's the way to go. I think that they should add a level where it's politically driven.**"**

Interviewees also stressed that the steering committee needs strong political leadership. According to a former VA official (personal communication, July 12, 2016):

> **"**I would set a strict rule: nobody on the steering committee—and you do need a steering committee to do the work in between the council meetings—nobody under assistant secretary-level will be permitted to come to these meetings. If a department cannot have their assistant secretary, then they're going to be left out of any decisions that are going to be made that they're going to have to comply with. That will motivate them to come to the table.**"**

At the same time, active involvement and consistent contribution by career employees in leadership positions will, in the eyes of some of the interviewees, be equally important for the evolution of the VEI. As one former DHS and DOD official explained (personal communication, September 14, 2016):

> **“** …you put these folks [political appointees] on the [steering] committee or the council, and [then some] people have the idea that then those [folks] get together and talk about this stuff and things get done. But it doesn't really work that way. Those folks designate people who are actually going to do the work, and then periodically, they get together and they have [meetings] and they officially decide on things…but they're not involved in those things on a day-to-day basis. [And so], how it works [is that] the people who actually ran the initiative [in a big] part, were the teams at each agency, not the council or steering committee. **”**

Along these same lines, one former DOL official offered the following suggestion (personal communication, July 20, 2017):

> **“** Have you thought about a solution where the government veteran employment initiative is not its own council, but is a working group under a government-wide veteran programs council? I don't think you'd ever get agency deputy secretaries to attend the VEI, but you could get them to attend the quarterly veteran programs council, chaired by the vice president, that addresses everything from education to housing to health care to immigration and citizenship to employment, with subgroups led by the appropriate cabinet agency deputy secretaries. **”**

As the council and the current presidential administration considers such recommendations, establishing procedures at the agency level to facilitate cooperation between political appointees and career staff working to support the VEI will be essential to improve leadership and management efforts. This will also provide a coordinating mechanism to carry out the priorities developed through the strategic planning process.

4.2.2 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

FINDING: The government-wide performance measurement system OPM and the council instituted in response to requirements in E.O. 13518 improved over time, from the initial system focused on hiring to the subsequent system that incorporated hiring, veterans onboard, and, importantly, veteran retention metrics. When grouping agencies by size, the system also provided needed adjustments for differences in agency size, resources, and other factors that could bear on employment outcomes. Additional research and consultation with OPM will be needed to develop a more advanced performance measurement system—one that supports strategic planning, performance improvement, and measurement of agency progress for a more holistic conception of veterans' employment.

For more than two decades, the use of performance measurement has been one of the most prevalent trends in public management, allowing managers to communicate goals and strategies clearly, assess the appropriateness of organizational expectations, and revise plans and policies (Speklé & Verbeeten, 2013). While performance measurement is inherently numbers-focused, the most important questions concerning its effectiveness do not usually center on numbers-based or technical issues, but instead on a combination of managerial and political dynamics—for example, who decides how measures get developed and connected to an organization's structure and functioning (Lewis, 2015).

These issues came into play almost immediately after the council introduced the VEI's initial performance measurement system in FY 2010. The council initially devoted its energy to establishing metrics that would increase the number of veterans hired into the federal workforce. The initial system established year-over-year goals focused on raising the percentage of veterans hired at each agency, with targeted percentage point increases for both total and disabled veteran new hires. The system established these goals using agencies' FY 2010 hiring percentages as a baseline and, based on FY 2010 performance, put each agency into either a red, yellow, or green group (indicating how much agencies would need to increase their hiring percentages). As a former OPM leader outlined it (personal communication, October 6, 2016):

> **"** ...what we did was we came up with...the red, yellow, green model template which [said] that if you were an agency that was in the green zone...then you were doing a great job and we ask you to just, one, stay where you were, don't backslide, and two, if you can do a little more, great. We also asked those agencies that were doing great to be role models and essentially mentors for agencies that were not doing a good job, that were either in the yellow or the red zone. For the mid-level performing agencies that were [in the yellow zone] we told them, look, your goal should be to increase your hiring by X%. Then, for the people in the red zone category, it was an effort to say, look, you guys have really got to drop some pounds and get into an exercise program and get into the race. You're going to get a lot of attention, both from mentor help and support, but also oversight and reporting and right up through the president himself. **"**

As this explanation suggests, the red-yellow-green classifications incorporated into the initial performance system publicized high and low performers to motivate improvement. As a Department of Education official claimed, simply having a clearer picture of performance trends helped the department to begin asking questions about its hiring record compared to other agencies (personal communication, July 25, 2016). About those comparisons, the official remarked (personal communication, July 25, 2016):

> **"** I didn't want to let us off the hook too easily by saying that well, we're different so therefore none of this applies, or that's not the attitude I think any of us really wanted to take. It was more of just when we started asking questions, we were like why are our numbers so different? It helped us I think come to a different understanding about what was and what is feasible and not feasible with hiring challenges that we typically manage here... **"**

A DHS official went further, arguing that in addition to motivating questions and prompting self-examination, publication and circulation of performance trends at the highest levels would have a "naming-and-shaming" effect (personal communication, September 14, 2016). In their words (personal communication, September 14, 2016):

> **"** ...public shaming is a very good management tool sometimes when you're trying to drive an agency to do something and being publicly revealed as one of the agencies that simply didn't seem to care wasn't something those agencies had wanted to do, so I think [it] got people's attention and got folks much more interested. **"**

Despite the value in quantifying performance on veteran hiring, generating insights, and motivating improvement, not all agencies embraced or saw value in the initial system. A number objected to the system exclusively focusing on hiring, treating FY 2010 as the baseline for establishing hiring goals, and requiring meeting more ambitious goals despite factors like an austere budget environment or, in some cases, already-significant veteran hiring (e.g., at DOD and VA, where existing high levels of veteran hiring would make improvements difficult). The exclusive focus on hiring resulted, according to one DHS official, in agencies "chasing a number" rather than focusing on the bigger set of issues in veterans' employment (personal communication, August 18, 2016). An OPM official pointed out that an agency could strive for and celebrate its hiring success but not realize its problems with retaining new hires (personal communication, May 17, 2016). And a DHS official argued the FY 2010 baseline set hiring targets without regard for historical trends (personal communication, September 14, 2016). As they argued (personal communication, September 14, 2016):

> **"**I think from a DHS perspective we weren't particularly happy with the way [that was] decided to measure success because it didn't work out as well for DHS. We had just gone through a massive expansion of the Border Patrol and as a result of that, had hired thousands and thousands of veterans, and this is what happens in government sometimes. If someone decides they're going to set a target and they pick a year at the baseline and say OK, you have to do better than this year, for DHS that meant we had to do better than the year where we hired over ten thousand veterans for the Border Patrol. So there was no way to do better [because] we weren't going to be doing a massive hiring exercise every year.**"**

Regarding difficulties achieving increasingly ambitious hiring goals, an OPM official recounted receiving a call from an agency complaining that meeting its goal required increasing the percentage of veterans from six to seven percent to roughly 13 percent of its overall employees. The OPM representative responded by emphasizing that 87 out of 100 hires did not have to be a veteran. The agency met its hiring goal (personal communication, June 7, 2016), but for others—particularly those that already hired many veterans and did not, in the view of some interviewees, have as much capacity for doing more hiring—the insistence on year-over-year increases was not feasible.

The initial system's focus on hiring created some unforeseen organizational consequences. Accordingly, since FY 2015, OPM has used a new system to rate agencies based on a combination of four employment metrics that provide a fuller picture of the veteran employment situation: veteran new hires, disabled veteran new hires, veterans on-board, and veteran retention rates. In addition, to measure agency performance and generate information based on these metrics, the new system—the Veteran Employment Performance Model—groups agencies by size so they are not compared and evaluated against others with different characteristics that bear on employment outcomes.

A number of interviewees called this as an improvement over the first system, noting the focus on retention and the agency groupings. Nonetheless, some still stressed that success in the veterans' employment context should be conceptualized in a more far reaching way   The use of metrics can be valuable to improve the functioning of an organization, foster learning, and communicate results to stakeholders (Micheli & Mari, 2014). Unless such measures can be synchronized with the environment in which they operate, however, what is attempted to be measured may not grasp the main aspects of what determines quality or success (Melnyk et. al., 2014; Van de Walle & Roberts, 2008). To ensure that performance measurement leads to a results-oriented system, managers need to gather the right information on the right parts of their overall strategy (Hatry, 2006; Hatry, 2014). On employment of veterans in the federal government, and more generally, improved employment prospects of veterans and groups like military spouses, interviewees stressed that further development of performance measurement requires "thinking bigger."

Despite calls to develop a universal measure that can quantify return on investment for organizations that support veterans, this is problematic for three reasons. First, the variation among employers, markets, and industry sectors renders this expectation unrealistic. Second, organizations hold different motivations for implementing veteran employment programs. Third, the logic must be based on an actionable strategy that places veterans as a human capital resource. To draw value from their investment, organizations must acquire, deploy (e.g., place), and then develop talented veterans in ways that enhance performance (Haynie, 2016).

From a practical standpoint, this means that metrics and measures must be tailored for each situation. For public sector agencies, the concerns will differ greatly from private employers, but the task is similar: Organizations must determine how veterans can provide value for the workforce. While appreciating the experience and skills that veterans possess is part of the mix, we lack a broader understanding of the organizational factors and processes that are most crucial for improving the effectiveness of veteran employment initiatives like the VEI.

For performance measurement to inform decision-making, it is important to gather the most optimal forms of quantitative, as well as qualitative, evidence. Because this is a new area of investigation, additional research is needed to develop an integrative performance measurement framework centered on veteran employment.

4.2.3 INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

FINDING: The VEI facilitated pre-existing cross-agency collaboration—particularly on veteran hiring and recruiting—and presents valuable opportunities to tap and institutionalize informal collaborative efforts identified during the initiative's implementation.

We uncovered several instances of cross-agency collaboration the VEI facilitated or enhanced. For example, during the formative period of the VEI, some agencies with well-established programs for veterans (e.g., DOD, DHS Labor, DOT, VA) shared information and know-how with their less experienced counterparts (e.g., Agriculture, Education, HHS). The VA, in particular, due to its large budget and agency mission, housed resources and programs that it was willing to share to help launch the initiative. As one senior OPM leader explained, the idea for establishing veteran employment program offices (VEPOs)—centralized clearinghouses for managing all veterans' employment issues—was based on an internal office that VA established before the VEI's inception (personal communication, June 7, 2016).

VEPOs proved to be especially useful in promoting collaborative efforts. It should be noted, however, that while this collaboration often occurred through (and because of) the employment offices set up under the VEI, information sharing was to a large extent a function of inter-personal relationships. A senior official at the Department of Education described this dynamic using an example of resume sharing between the department's VEPO and the VEPO at another agency (personal communication, July 25, 2016):

> "Our [VEPO] manager has a very good relationship with [another agency's] manager, so what she found to be successful is that they do a lot of resume sharing among each other, searching out jobs that we have and vice versa. [In doing this], they will actually share their candidate pool with us and we will share ours with theirs [when we think we have candidates that may meet one another's needs]."

Further collaboration like this will require efforts to institutionalize information sharing and other types of interactions across department and agency boundaries. When developing strategy, an understanding of formal and informal processes that motivate sharing is useful because it provides new insights on resources and tools that are available to facilitate sharing arrangements (Van Assche, Beunen, & Duineveld, 2014).

Research indicates that innovative means of planning emerge from the collective action of many parties. It can be administrative-based or technical through new combinations of existing know-how and resources. Much has been written, for instance, about "collaborative public management," a process of facilitating and operating in multi-organizational relationships to solve problems that cannot be resolved alone (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003). The council's emphasis on collaboration will be instrumental to shaping the initiative's future trajectory. It must circumvent inherent challenges researchers have increasingly identified that can impede information and resourcing sharing across organizational boundaries. Collaboration can be effective, but the potential costs and risks that are either voluntarily assumed or mandated can render such efforts unappealing. Effective leaders do not attempt to resolve this paradox, but they manage it by accepting, embracing, and in some cases overcoming tensions by adopting creative approaches (Bingham & O'Leary, 2008).

The federal government has over the past 25 years transformed itself from a traditional, bureaucratic hierarchy to a knowledge-based managerial culture, but effective collaboration will continue to be a challenge as agencies and employees cannot be forced to do it. For leaders of the VEI, it will be essential to gauge the willingness of employees to engage in collaborative efforts like sharing information about position openings, qualified candidates to fill the positions, and broader best practices regarding recruiting, hiring, and management of veterans' employment efforts (Amayah, 2013). One former DOD official and member of the VEI steering committee described a practice wherein colleagues at HUD would proactively forecast human capital needs and provide this information to their human resources colleagues. In turn, human resources staff would work with the hiring managers to craft employment listings and empower them to attend veterans' job fairs with knowledge of the hiring flexibilities they could use (including flexibilities to make on-the-spot offers). In their words (personal communication, August 17, 2016):

> " That's a great model... ...it was really a team effort [in that] one person in the team could spec out everything needed [in terms of human capital], and the other person on the team was a subject matter expert on how to hire people and interview and recruit, and they [worked together]. "

However, according to a senior DOL official (personal communication, July 20, 2017):

> " ...this practice has become much less common as agencies exhibit more concern about complying with veteran preference and are unsure about the flexibilities available to them. Outside of VA and some DOD elements, we rarely saw government agencies with a presence at veteran hiring fairs. "

To continue promoting effective collaboration, agency leaders, IT managers, and human resource professionals should define their needs clearly and encourage organizational commitment in terms of measurable results (Kim & Lee, 2006). Less than 50 percent of respondents to our chief human capital officers survey expressed that their agencies are "heavily involved" in collaborating with other agencies to implement the VEI. There is more work to do.

4.2.4 STAKEHOLDER INFORMATION SHARING AND DATA ANALYSIS

FINDING: OPM created tools like the Feds Hire Vets website to provide a single source of information on hiring preference, the federal job application process, training, and associated resources to assist veterans, transitioning service members, their families, federal HR professionals, and hiring managers.
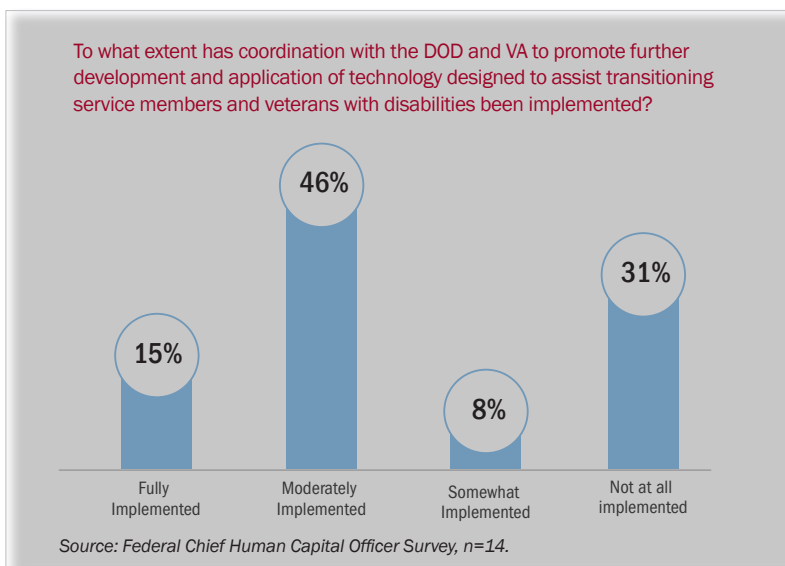
In addition to inter-agency collaboration on veterans' employment issues, OPM used tools like web-based information sharing platforms to facilitate cooperation among agencies, external stakeholders like VSOs, and individual veterans and military families to promote veterans' employment. A key example is the Feds Hire Vets website (www.fedshirevets. org). The site provides an information gateway on hiring preference, the federal job application process, training, and associated resources to assist veterans, transitioning service members, their families, and HR professionals. It also includes a range of publicly available information, including annual reports on progress related to veterans hiring by specific agencies. These reports were generated from monthly performance metrics established by the steering committee and the council. To establish accountability, OPM gathered and collated this information from each agency's veteran employment office. The website also helped to carry out a public marketing campaign, as well as public outreach with stakeholders such as the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Disabled American Veterans, and the Chamber of Commerce. According to one of the OPM leaders, these veteran service organizations embraced the initiative and reached out to their constituencies to assist with the hiring campaign (personal communication, June 7, 2016). In this official's words (personal communication, June 7, 2016):

> The VSOs were fantastic. The VSOs embraced the Initiative. They felt like they also had been briefed on it and connected with it, because [the then OPM director] John Berry really made certain that we tell them all aspects of what we're doing. Let's make certain that they understand. And they provided [a number of] suggestions because we actually did the focus groups [with key stakeholders, e.g., individuals from the veteran and military family community] via [the VSO] organizations that we had spoken to.

In general, the federal government has been successful with providing a high level of e-government services. The collaborative nature of these systems provides new means of collaboration and engagement that had been cost-prohibitive. Information sharing improves efficiency by pooling resources and shared technical expertise and guards against redundancy through multiple data collection projects and storage. From an organizational standpoint, a range of managerial factors can impact the success of data sharing efforts (e.g., structure, leadership, resources, strategy, and process) (Chen & Ahn, 2017; Gil-Garcia & Sayogo, 2016).

While Feds Hire Vets provides a valuable tool to post a range of information to support the VEI and veterans' employment, more will be needed. Indeed, our discussions with those involved with the design of the VEI did indicate that the management and sharing of data within and across agencies has been complicated. In our survey of chief human capital officers, only 15 percent of respondents indicated their agencies had fully implemented activities directed under the EO to collaborate with VA and DOD in the development and application of technology to assist veterans and transitioning service members with disabilities.

To what extent has coordination with the DOD and VA to promote further development and application of technology designed to assist transitioning service members and veterans with disabilities been implemented?

Fully Implemented	Moderately Implemented	Somewhat Implemented	Not at all implemented
15%	46%	8%	31%

Source: Federal Chief Human Capital Officer Survey, n=14.

A former director of veterans' services at OPM said that the agency faced a "constant battle" related to the "credibility and accuracy" of data, as well as the creation of a uniform system for information collection (personal communication, July 12, 2016). Likewise, a DOL senior official observed (personal communication, July 20, 2017):

> ...there was actually competition between the FedsHireVets site and the VA's veteran hiring initiative and website. It would be helpful if there was clear guidance for every agency to post their own veteran recruiting info or for all agencies to go through FedsHireVets.

It will be imperative to surmount these information management challenges to ensure effective engagement with VSOs, veterans, and military families involved in promoting or seeking employment in the federal government. According to a leader of one VSO (personal communication, January 25, 2017):

> I just think more–there needs to be more outreach done with veterans and federal employment. More. There needs to be an outreach initiative, because again, you know, from where I sit, we say something about federal employment, [and] I mean veterans [would] go wild if they didn't know like these things were available...so I'm a big fan on outreach.

Crafting and implementing a data collection and management process is resource and time intensive. When specific and actionable, information can reduce the lag time between analysis of problems and strategies to improve results (Mergel et. al, 2016). A major strategic challenge is to balance the need for informed policy making by weighing the need for data analytics with the multiple issues raised through this implementation assessment. If feasible within budgetary constraints, designing and building technological platforms to support the VEI will further policy objectives.

■ 4.3 AGENCY-LEVEL PERCEPTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VEI AND VETERANS EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

Most accounts that examine policy implementation tend to explain dynamics that stem from factors such as design, planning, or communication, but fail to examine the critical roles that managers within public organizations play (Cloutier et. al, 2016). Human resources managers working for federal agencies plan, coordinate, and manage key administrative functions of each agency. They direct the recruiting, interviewing, and hiring of new employees; consult with senior executives to craft strategic plans; and provide essential connections between the agency and its employees. In many cases, OPM takes the lead with developing, testing, and executing new government-wide policies that relate to personnel issues (BLS, 2017a; OPM, 2017f). An underlying assumption of planning is that it should provide a simplified and ordered set of actions aligned with the overall public purpose of a given policy initiative (Christensen 2016). Furthermore, organizational commitment enables government to improve employee hiring, retention, and performance, especially when confronted with financial constraints (Stazyk, Pandey, & Wright, 2011). Accordingly, the VEI was built around a well-conceived process to encourage collaboration, a performance measurement system to hold agencies accountable, and a managerial framework and strategic plan to address barriers to implementation.

At the same time, the initiative remains a product of a political mandate that instructs agencies to provide an enhanced, if not new, public service. It was important for the VEI to be conceived as an ongoing process with a long-term, common vision rather than a quick fix to the presidential directive. Based on the mandate, agencies must react by applying the required policy changes to their service delivery (Mergel & Desouza, 2013). Political appointees usually support the policy objectives of their appointers and seek to orient their expectations for their own subordinates in accordance with these same aims. Opposing views, if present, can be marginalized or outright dismissed.

Even so, a uniform, enthusiastic response throughout the federal civil service should not be expected. Differences in organizational interests and managerial cultures, personal agendas, resistance to official government policies, and power dynamics are commonplace in government. Understanding how public servants collaborate within organizational settings, share views that may be at odds with political leaders, or build counter-agency agendas can provide valuable insight (O'Leary, 2013).

Federal agencies acting to implement policy on a government-wide scale face an elaborate undertaking. This was clear with the VEI. For implementation, agency leaders needed to assign responsibilities for coordinating functions and activities like the VEPOs, determine and allocate resources for these tasks, and take numerous other decisions and actions. As with any complex implementation, the nature of interagency structures, diverging organizational goals, established operational norms, and the mere complexity of the issues involved can pose barriers to adequate execution (Frazier, 2014). In relation to agency-level perceptions and implementation of the VEI, the data point to three specific findings.

4.3.1 AGENCY-LEVEL PERCEPTIONS OF THE VEI AND VETERANS EMPLOYMENT

FINDING: Agencies perceived the VEI and the broader push to facilitate veterans' employment with mixed views. They generally embraced the idea and the value of employing veterans but also cited concerns including impacts on workforce diversity, conflict with other hiring priorities, and whether veterans could perform (or would even be attracted to) civilian roles and missions seen as unrelated to the military.

Agency reception of the VEI and the push to employ veterans has varied considerably. Research continues to show broad public support for veterans after 15 years of war (Schake & Mattis 2016)—including and especially in regard to veterans' employment—but agency perceptions of the VEI reflect both (i) specific concerns about veterans' impact on the federal workforce, as well as (ii) aspects of a broader civil-military divide that shapes (and at times distorts) public and private sector employers' perspectives on veterans' career aspirations, performance potential, and fit in the workplace.

Regarding impacts on the federal workforce, several interviewees pointed to agency concerns about balancing achievement of the VEI's employment goals with other diversity hiring efforts, including executive orders pertaining to individuals with disabilities and efforts to employ women, Hispanics, and other groups (personal communication, May 17, 2016). According to an OPM official (personal communication, May 17, 2016):

> **"**...agencies [do] have competing priorities. There is an executive order working with disabilities. There is the whole Hispanic employment initiative. So agencies face competing priorities and limited resources. And when I say limited resources we're talking about fulltime bodies to do this stuff.**"**

Some interviewees raised the normative issue of how much veterans should be represented in the federal workforce, asking whether there is a point beyond which veterans comprise too large a percentage of the workforce relative to other population groups (personal communication, January 20, 2017).

In addition to concerns about diversity and representation, interviewee reflections suggest individuals in some agencies may deem their organizations' work and mission to be poorly aligned with veterans' interests, skills, and military job experience. According to an OPM official, some agencies said they would struggle to meet the VEI's hiring goals out of a belief that their work would not resonate with veterans. In this individual's words (personal communication, July 12, 2016):

> **"**The agencies that we had the biggest problems with in trying to meet goals [were] the agencies that felt that they were working in areas that did not appeal to veterans. I always thought that was kind of a red herring. The Department of Agriculture, you would think, [would see itself as a fit] because a lot of young servicemen and women came from the heartland of the country and would gravitate to jobs with those agencies. But, [the department] did not [seem to] think that. [In cases like these], I fought the agencies in how they outreached to veterans, and how they sold jobs and marketed them.**"**

Even if they have interests in certain types of work, interviewees also suggested some agencies see veterans as not fully equipped with the requisite skills or expertise for certain missions. A Department of Education official said their agency works hard to reach out and engage interested veterans, but (personal communication, July 25, 2016):

> **"**...we're fundamentally different from say, a DHS or a Veterans Affairs, and so there are some inherent challenges that a lot of our positions do require specialized experience, education, certifications, [and so on].**"**

An official from the National Science Foundation (NSF) echoed these sentiments. As an example, this individual described a situation in which a veteran with multiple master's degrees and strong qualifications for a position to evaluate research grants in the natural sciences struggled to get an NSF job because—despite his knowledge—he did not have a PhD and the

years of grant evaluation and research experience his civilian counterparts otherwise acquired over time given that they did not serve in the military (and that, for better or worse, are seen by some stakeholders as essential "qualifications boxes" one must check before they are allowed to decide on expenditure of taxpayer dollars; personal communication, September 8, 2017). An official from USAID also commented, indicating that beyond just specific skill sets and experience, agency workforce composition can also be challenging for smaller agencies. As this official argued (personal communication, August 31, 2017):

> **"** ...whereas the VEI is geared particularly toward employment in the competitive service, 60 percent of our agency's hires are in the foreign service, which can make things more challenging. **"**

A former OPM leader acknowledged these points. He stressed, however, that they are not and should not be as big a problem as some think (personal communication, October 6, 2016):

> **"** ...some of that is legitimate, [but] some of it I would argue is probably not legitimate in the sense that there are some cases in some positions that are totally unique that there may not be a direct translator, but...I would argue for probably 97 percent of the positions in the civilian side, there is a counterpart in the defense side, and we should be able to bridge those more effectively. A lot of the small agencies try to say, oh no, we're unique, we're special; we need somebody with accounting skills. Well, don't tell me that somebody who has managed a weapons acquisition program, accounting for $57 billion and bringing the program in on time and on budget, and managing all the complexities can't handle your accounting systems. **"**

Building off these observations—as well as providing something of a qualification to them—a former OPM and DOL official stressed the need to avoid any preconceptions about veterans' interests, skill sets, and career goals. Echoing the example about the Department of Agriculture, this official argued that veterans may gravitate toward work outside their skill set and should not be seen as always wanting to follow the path directly from their military occupational specialty to a comparable civilian one (personal communication, October 12, 2016):

> **"** I hesitate to say that we should be looking at veterans in what I would say are stereotypical career paths, like cyber, like border patrol, like, you know, those sorts of things, because that excludes or presupposes a world view where veterans are only qualified to do the things they did in the military. **"**

While making this point, however, this individual also qualified the example of the Department of Agriculture by arguing assumptions about veterans' career desires also should not be predicated on where they have lived, their communities, or other aspects of their life before and during military service (personal communication, October 12, 2016).

This alludes to the more general issue of a civil-military divide in how civilians—federal employees and hiring managers included—view veterans and their fit in the workplace compared to how veterans view themselves. According to a former DOD and DHS official, civilian misconceptions about veterans' lack of interest, fit, and skill alignment with different types of work stems from in part from a misunderstanding about military and civilian work cultures (personal communication, September 14, 2016):

> **"**They [civilians] have this impression of the Department of Defense and of the military that is wrong. They believe the military is very rigid and inflexible and that people don't have any freedom to do anything, and so they have this very negative view of military culture. I worked for the Department of Defense for 26 years, and my experience with them was that this stereotypical view of the military was totally wrong. It wasn't based on reality at all, and so I think there are agencies where they simply had an incorrect view of the culture of the military. As a result, they were not very interested in bringing those folks into their organization...**"**

An OPM official echoed this sentiment, arguing "we still have a long way to go" toward educating the non-veteran workforce and dispelling myths (personal communication, May 17, 2016). These myths range from flawed conceptions about military culture and the way veterans will approach their work (in a rigid, inflexible manner when they feel they cannot exercise any freedom or independent judgment); to veteran career interests always being related to their military job experience; to ill-informed concerns about the prevalence and implications of PTSD (personal communication, May 17, 2016). This last issue is particularly disconcerting, with some interviewees arguing that on account of some employees' and managers' negative or uninformed views of PTSD and other adjustment-related challenges, veterans may not be hired, or will be hired but enter a work environment not conducive to successful integration (personal communication, September 14, 2016).

Learning how to bridge the gaps between the transition challenges veterans experience and the perceptions and expectations that managers and co-workers hold will be crucial for future success of the VEI. Slightly more than half of veterans responding to our cross-agency survey of employees and hiring managers indicated they feel their contributions are valued, their supervisor understands the perspectives they bring to the workplace, and their colleagues understand the perspectives they bring to the workplace.

FIGURE 4.3.1.1 VETERAN EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF AGENCY WORKPLACE

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

Statement	% Agree or Strongly Agree
My department/agency is military friendly.	73%
I feel my work advances my department/agency mission.	85%
As a veteran, my colleagues understand the perspectives I bring to the workplace.	54%
As a veteran, my supervisor understands the perspectives I bring to the workplace.	55%
As a veteran, my contributions are valued.	59%

Veteran Employees who Agree or Strongly Agree with the Statements

Source: Veteran Employment in the Federal Government Survey, n=4,184.

Ultimately, however, more education will be critical to ensuring civilian hiring managers and employees see veterans' potential to make valuable contributions to their organizations, make efforts to understand their transition challenges, and appreciate that veterans possess a diverse array of job preferences and career goals. For their part, it is incumbent upon veterans to leverage available resources and supports to communicate their skills to civilian employers, demonstrate their fit for jobs they seek, and convey their experience working flexibly and taking initiative over the course of their service.

4.3.2 AGENCY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VEI

FINDING: Implementation of the VEI proved strongest among large departments and agencies with more resources and a strong cultural affinity for hiring veterans—such as the departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security, and Labor. Smaller agencies with more specialized missions experienced greater difficulties. Veterans Employment Program Offices (VEPOs)—agency offices established as a centerpiece of the VEI to coordinate agency veteran employment activities—provide an especially telling illustration of differences in implementation success, with larger agencies maintaining dedicated staffing and focus but smaller ones struggling to commit full-time resources.

The VEI enjoyed a strong, enthusiastic initial rollout. As with other programs of its scale and scope, however, several barriers to implementation emerged at the agency level. To align interagency planning across such a vast and diverse enterprise, the VEI required each agency represented on the council to develop an operational plan to promote employment opportunities for veterans and establish program offices or designate agency officers for these purposes. Agencies were also required to apply the performance measurement system internally and provide annual training for human resources staff and hiring managers that addresses veterans hiring preference, special hiring authorities for veterans, and related issues (E.O.13518, 2009).

Variation in previous experience with veteran employment and advocacy programs among agencies complicated the uniform execution of the VEI strategic planning process and subsequent implementation activities. In the words of an OPM official, "one of the biggest barriers…was just [the lack among many agencies] of an infrastructure that supported veterans" (personal communication, May 17, 2016). A number of agencies lacked the previous training, expertise, and formal or informal means of carrying out the VEI's complex management and leadership requirements.

Perhaps the most significant mandate established under the VEI—the most illustrative in terms of agencies' varying implementation successes and challenges—was the Veteran Employment Program Office (VEPO). E.O. 13518 required each agency to establish a program office or designate an official to provide centralized coordination of veteran employment activities. The VEPOs were intended to serve this purpose, providing the kind of support infrastructure many agencies lacked up to that time. A key centerpiece of the VEI, the VEPOs were tasked with serving as coordinating entities for veterans' recruitment, hiring, and integration of new veteran employees into the federal workforce through training, career development, and other processes.

At the time of the VEI's introduction, a few agencies already ran offices that modeled the VEPOs' intent. The existing office at the VA, for instance, served as the inspiration for the VEPO concept (personal communication, July 7, 2016). Reflecting on the VA example and the broader concept, the former OPM director described the intent of the VEPOs (personal communication, October 6, 2016):

> ❝What we tried to do in each agency was to create better resource organizations and groups that were made up of existing veterans who were working in their agency who could be the bridge for that person, who could be the mentor or the guidance counselor if you will for the newbies and help them adapt to whatever culture they were moving into so that they could know somebody that they could trust and have their back, but at the same time, help them figure out how to move into the workplace.❞

As this observation suggests, the VEPOs were meant to combine institutional knowledge, expertise in hiring, recruiting, onboarding, and training, and cultural competency in working with veterans. As one OPM official put it, the best VEPOs

were managed by experts—a number of whom were veterans—who combined knowledge of government processes with strong service backgrounds and confidence in their abilities to understand and interact with veterans seeking employment (personal communication, July 12, 2016):
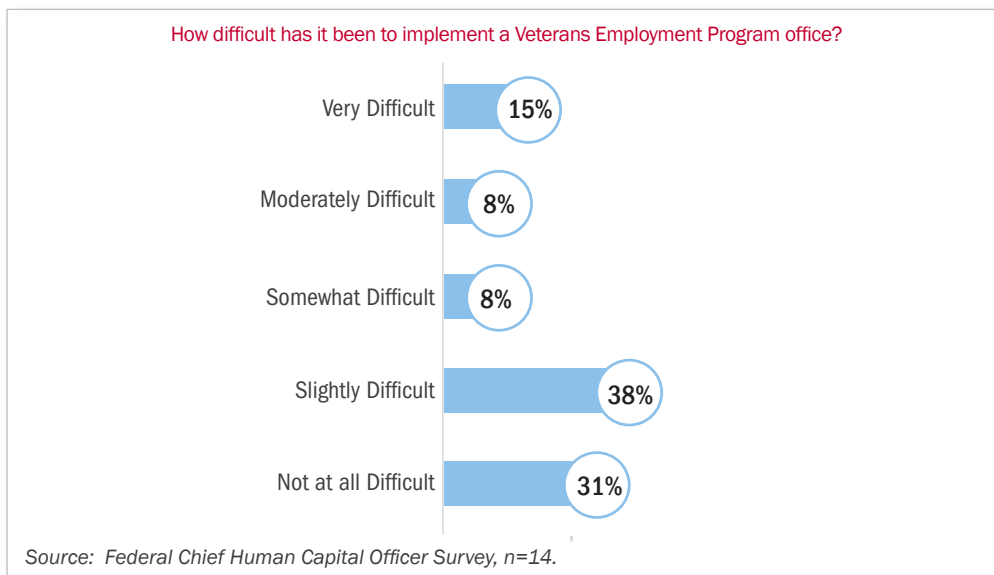
> **"**...the ones who were really good, I felt had successful careers when they were in service. They felt good about their service time. They felt comfortable talking to veterans. They could navigate the internal politics. They understood what veterans wanted to know, and could translate some of the 'government-ese' into layman's terms. **"**

As both the executive order itself and the council and steering committee members who drove the VEPO process envisioned, successful establishment and execution of these offices would be a full-time job. Indeed, the EO explicitly directed that agencies task their veterans' employment officer or designee "with full-time responsibility" for managing their veterans' employment program (E.O.13518, 2009).

For larger agencies with significant veteran hiring—such as the VA, DOD, and DHS—this did not represent a major challenge (although of course, each agency's experience was different). Smaller agencies faced stronger resource and staffing challenges, and nearly 70 percent of the chief human capital officers responding to our survey indicated at least slight difficulty putting their VEPO in place.

FIGURE 4.3.2.1 CHCO PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFICULTY IMPLEMENTING THEIR AGENCY'S VETERAN EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM OFFICE

How difficult has it been to implement a Veterans Employment Program office?

Very Difficult	15%
Moderately Difficult	8%
Somewhat Difficult	8%
Slightly Difficult	38%
Not at all Difficult	31%

Source: Federal Chief Human Capital Officer Survey, n=14.

Some responded creatively to these difficulties and still strived to carry out the intent of the VEPO despite shortages in staff or other resource needs. An official at the Department of Education described how a veteran employment program manager in their agency reached out to colleges and universities to identify veterans qualified for positions and recruited them for both positions at headquarters offices and in communities administering educational grants (thereby exposing them to both federal work culture as well as important pieces of the agency mission carried out in schools and communities; personal communication, July 25, 2016).

Ultimately, however, a number of small agencies exhibited either a lack of willingness or lack of ability to maintain fully staffed, active VEPOs. A former DHS official said that some small agencies "didn't appear to be terribly serious about the whole thing" (personal communication, August 18, 2016). And even for those who did, according to a former official with experience at both DHS and DOD, their managers were sometimes responsible for multiple diversity hiring initiatives at once. According to this individual (personal communication, September 14, 2016):

> **"** There were agencies where the veterans' program manager was really dual or triple or quadruple hatted with various other responsibilities, and that was a function of the size. If you are a very small agency, it's harder to devote the resources to it. **"**

An NSF official commented on this in the case of their VEPO, indicating that there is little staff and the VEPO director also has responsibilities pertaining to employment of Presidential Management Fellows (PMFs), individuals in the Senior Executive Service (SES), and others (personal communication, September 8, 2017). Likewise, a USAID official said that their VEPO is a "one-man shop," and that, even in just the case of veterans, the VEPO director "has responsibility from cradle to grave—recruiting, hiring, and retention" (personal communication, August 31, 2017).

To achieve widespread implementation progress—across both VEPO-type activities and others begun under the VEI's auspices—agencies small and large will need a sufficient level of resources. However, they must also appreciate that in a resource-constrained environment they will need to be innovative to succeed.

4.3.3 CHALLENGES WITH VETERANS EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

FINDING: While the VEI does not specifically address Veterans Preference and the broader set of authorities pertaining to hiring veterans, interviewees and survey respondents expressed widespread dissatisfaction with the existing hiring rules, difficulty implementing the rules, potential for unfairness or non-compliance, and needs for change in policy.

The VEI does not specifically emphasize or call for changes in the rules governing Veterans Preference or other authorities agencies can use to hire veterans, but difficulty understanding and implementing veteran hiring authorities, along with a need for improvement in this area, was perhaps the most widespread theme that arose in the interviews and surveys. Every individual the research team interviewed raised this problem, and the group that originally conceived of the VEI and the executive order—going back to the 2009 strategic meeting where the initiative and the idea for the order originated—identified poor understanding of hiring rules as a principal barrier to improving veterans' employment (personal communication, May 17, 2016). In the words of a former OPM official (personal communication, July 12, 2016):

> **"** My experience [was] that federal HR people are not as well-trained as they should, and a lot of them don't understand veteran preference at all. They don't understand the consequences of the decisions they make. **"**

Such lack of understanding results in frequent misapplication of applicable hiring procedures, as well as a number of broader problems. A former DOD official raised one powerful point in this regard, arguing that without sufficient grasp and application of the authorities available to them, agencies may fail to quickly and effectively tap veteran talent. This

individual pointed to hiring fairs as an example, where highly skilled, qualified veterans may show up with resumes in hand, know exactly what they are looking for in terms of jobs, and present agencies with an opportunity to hire on the spot. Without strong command of their options and understanding of when and how to use them, however, agencies frequently miss out on these opportunities. According to the official (personal communication, August 17, 2016):

> So the most frustrating thing is to go to a job fair, wanting to get a job and an agency not being able to make an on-the-spot offer, even if it's contingent on some validation and verification. And I catch some agencies reluctant to do that. It's not attractive otherwise. [The consequence of this is that] if I [as a veteran] come to a job fair and I bring my resume, I'm all spit and polish and ready to go and you can't make an offer to me that day, then I'm not interested, because the private sector can [make me that kind of offer]. So you really have to have a great alignment between your HR professionals and your hiring managers on the program side to say these are exactly the spots we want, and if the candidate meets the requirements and we feel there is a fit, we're going to make an on-the-spot offer and we're going to make sure we have our ducks in a row with the right employment authority to go do that.

Of course, it is important for veterans to understand that the Veterans' Preference and other hiring authorities do not guarantee them a job—a flawed perception interviewees suggested a number of people in the veterans' community hold—but nonetheless, as this example illustrates, were agency HR personnel and hiring managers more knowledgeable on the issue, they could significantly improve hiring and veteran satisfaction with the hiring process.[5]

In addition to lack of understanding, there is the broader problem that HR professionals and others involved in the hiring process are overwhelmed by the scope of diversity hiring requirements with which they must comply. According to a former DOL official (personal communication, January 20, 2017):

> All of the affirmative action programs that the Obama administration [in particular] wanted to see take place in the broader economy, it [wanted] implemented inside the federal government. So if you're an HR person, you have hundreds of programs that you are trying to ensure compliance with. And so if the veterans' employment objective were to go away, I think HR folks would go, 'Phew, one less thing I have to worry about.' Right? And we'll just let natural selection take its course, and if we get a veteran, yay, but, you know, if I don't have to worry about my specific numbers then yay, that's one less thing I have to be reported on.

As this DOL official went on to argue, in some cases the burden of compliance with veterans hiring rules may actually lead agency HR personnel to engage in practices that allow them to purposefully avoid dealing with the rules. Over one-third of both veteran and non-veteran hiring managers we surveyed cited administrative burden as a source of difficulty implementing Veterans' Preference, and as the DOL official put it (personal communication, January 20, 2017):

> Because the rules are so complicated that HR people don't want to touch it with a 10-foot pole, they will [very often] try to craft recruitment strategies so that they don't have to deal with Veterans' Preference.

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5. See Section 2.2, Veterans' Preference.

Why is Veterans' Preference difficult to implement (select all that apply):

Source: Veteran Employment in the Federal Government Survey.
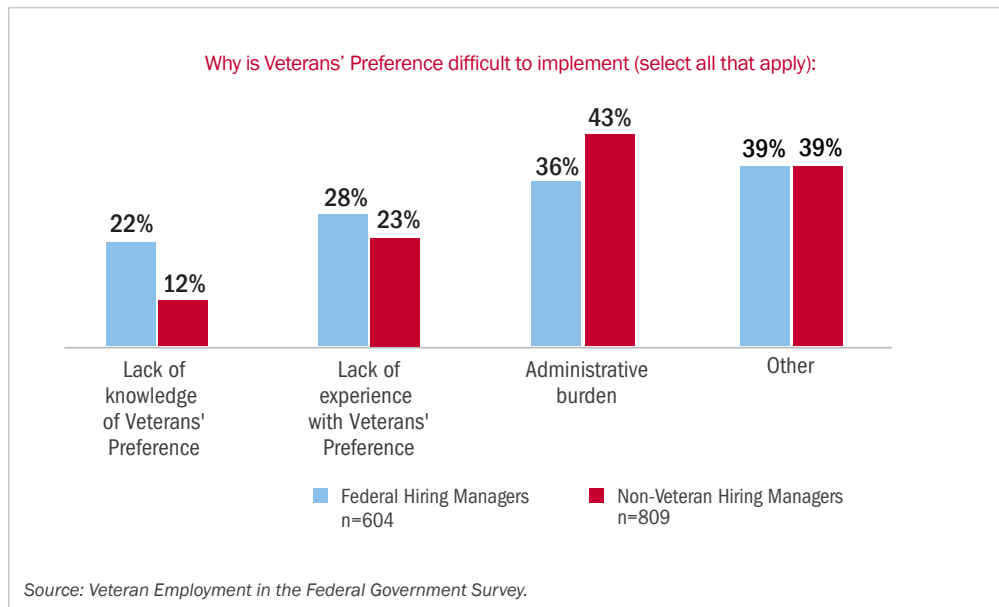
Such practices feed a perception that the federal government—despite its professed commitment and actions through the VEI and other well documented efforts (e.g., career fairs, information and training seminars, employment bootcamps, etc.)—is not as enthusiastic as it purports to be about hiring veterans. Interviewees from some veteran service organizations pointed to this as an example of a longer, historical problem of what they call "vetism"—or processes prejudiced against veterans (personal communication, February 2, 2017). The viewpoints that hiring managers and HR staff may not comply with procedure related to veteran preference, or treat applicants unfairly, is sensitive issue that a former OPM leader acknowledged wrestling with. In their words (personal communication, October 6, 2017):

> " There was a lot of, I would say, unspoken fear in that regard that people were almost afraid to address and what I would do is hit that right between the eyes in that I would make the point of, at the end of the day, I am not asking you to hire people that are unqualified… But, what you should not do is in any way prejudice against veterans. "

Ensuring veterans feel they are treated fairly with respect to hiring and competing for jobs, and are kept informed of their standing during the application process, will be critical as policy debates continue over the future of the Veterans' Preference, veteran hiring authorities, and the federal government's principles regarding employing veterans.

4.4 CROSS-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

While not established to promote veteran hiring in the private sector—nor focused on driving private sector employment outcomes either now or going forward—the VEI and its implementation did reveal that the experiences of both (i) veterans seeking employment in the federal sector, and (ii) agencies seeking to hire them, experience a number of the same challenges as their counterparts in the private sector. As in the private sector, both veterans seeking federal government jobs and agencies striving to employ veterans confront issues pertaining to skill alignment and translation, as well as incorporation of best recruiting and hiring practices from other sectors and organizations.

4.4.1 VETERAN SKILL ALIGNMENT

FINDING: The council and steering committee identified the transferability of military-acquired skills to federal employment requirements as a top priority for the VEI. Addressing these concerns was a dominant theme expressed by the interviewees. The inherent complexity of this process, in practice, was a short-term impediment to the design and implementation of a formal process to address this need.

The VEI aims not only to increase the number of veterans who are hired, but also to retain and develop their future career paths. Despite the large number of veterans in the federal workforce, there is limited empirical research on how veterans adapt and adjust once hired. Moreover, according to statistics in the most recent Federal Employment Viewpoint Surveys, veterans (36 percent) are more likely to plan to leave government employment than nonveterans (29 percent). Likewise, nearly 40 percent of the chief human capital officers responding to our survey said veteran employees turn over more often than non-veteran employees in their agencies. The VEI will likely face difficulty without fully realizing its objectives if high rates of veteran turnover persist (Vanderschuere, 2016).

FIGURE 4.4.1.1 CHCO PERCEPTIONS OF VETERAN VS. NON-VETERAN EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

Compared to non-veteran employees, veteran employees in my department/agency turnover

Less often	About the same	More often
23%	38%	38%

Source: Federal Chief Human Capital Officer Survey, n=14.
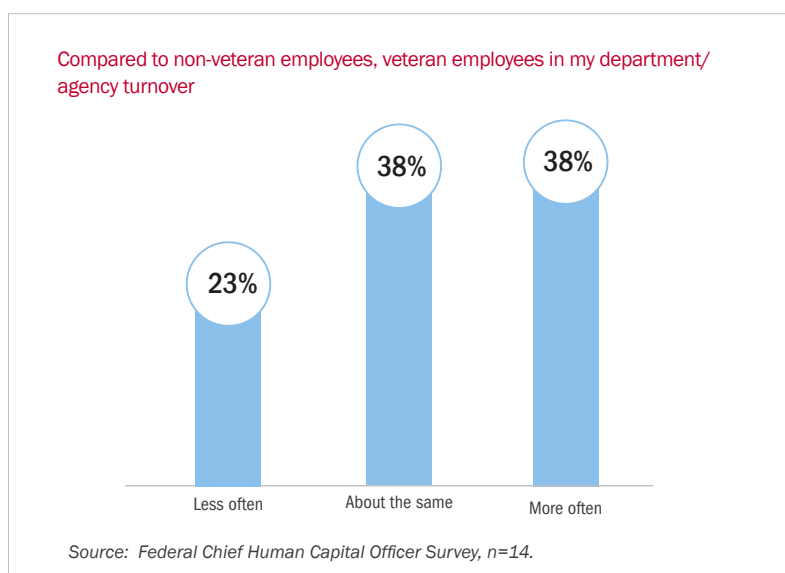
Furthermore, one of the most significant employment challenges that veterans face is that civilian employers and co-workers may lack insight regarding the suitability of military skill sets in civilian organizations. Many civilian employers aim to provide a flexible and unrestricted work culture that stands in contrast to the hierarchical chain-of-command within the ranks (Trice & Beyer, 1993 as cited in Stone & Stone, 2015). Some hiring managers may be predisposed to reject veterans from consideration due to perceptions that veterans are rigid, or predisposed to mental health issues such as PTSD that have been stigmatized within American society.

Few studies within human resource management have investigated such factors affecting hiring decisions and the alignment of skills between military and civilian work cultures (Stone & Stone, 2015). Aligning the career aspirations of transitioning service members and veterans with career services, training, and employment opportunities is a key strategic goal for the VEI (OPM, 2010; OPM 2014). According to the former OPM director (personal communication October 6, 2016):

> *"If you looked at this program in the long term, phase one was federal, phase two was private engagement, and phase three would probably be dealing with employment issues. ... For military folks who were coming out of the field, there was not a direct skill translation from what they were doing to the workplaces they were going into. In the military, you have a close-knit supportive structure that's there to have your back, and in civilian agencies, some have it and some don't. In other words, they were coming into a very different culture than what they had. Our concern in phase three was aimed more at trying to resolve those initial cultural adaptation issues, and then phase four would be what you would move into and discuss in terms of advancement and retention."*

One frequently mentioned concern among those we interviewed was the need to match federal jobs with military conferred skills. People may acquire skills in the military that are not rewarded by civilian employers, especially if their occupational specialty is combat-related (MacLean, 2017). Veterans who are highly skilled may also struggle when leaving the service because they lack the academic qualifications that underpin skills or training learned in the military (Kleykamp, 2009). Addressing this gap was a serious challenge for the council and steering committee. One example is the process through which certifications gained through military training and job experience could be transferred for use within the civilian job sector (personal communication, October 6, 2016):

> *Things like nursing regulations are run by each state. There is no national nursing association. I mean, there is, but each state sets their own standards and so, we were trying to get a situation where people could just naturally be certified and receive credit for their military service but some of the state organizations were willing, and some weren't so it got very complicated and you could see what the veterans had to face when they were coming out of the field and facing this level of complexity.*

The range of military job specialties is numerous; equivalent civilian positions can be different or nonexistent; and the experience levels of those serving in the armed forces are almost as diverse as the occupations themselves. Some military jobs have direct or close counterparts in the civilian sector, such as jet engine mechanics, air traffic controllers, land surveyors, military police, and information technology specialists. Though the certification requirements differ by state and locality, transitioning service members who choose a path to similar civilian careers such as these can more easily transfer their military experience or demonstrate their skills to civilian employers. According to an individual at one veteran service organization (personal communication, February 2, 2017):

> *I was a Navy pilot for 25 years. I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted to do when I left military service. I probably didn't do as much due diligence as I should have done, [but] it was really easy for me to say, I think I'll fly an airplane. I flew for American Airlines for 13 years, and it was great.*

On the other hand, many military jobs, especially within combat-oriented specialties, do not have a direct civilian equivalent (Maury et. al, 2016). Veterans find work in a wide range of fields and with nearly every type of employer. The remarkable diversity of jobs is a testimony to the vast array of transferrable skills (or the generalized skill structure) that characterizes the military as an institution. Military occupational specialty, and more significantly, rank and level of education are closely related to several predictors of civilian job adjustment, such as employment status, salary or hourly wage, and perceived job-finding difficulties (Biderman & Sharp, 1968; Brown & Routon, 2016; Hirsch & Mehay, 2003; Mangum & Ball, 1989; Routon, 2014).

VEI leaders, echoing the sentiment of generations of employers, stressed that veteran status can serve as a positive screen, allowing hiring managers to classify more useful applicants from less useful ones (DeTray, 1982 as cited in Routon, 2014). To enter the armed forces, one must pass exams that confirm the candidate is physically, mentally, and ethically matched for military service. Since most employers are aware of the military's selection process, veteran status indicates that the potential employee has these levels of physical, mental, and moral resilience (Routon 2014).

Traits such as dependability, the ability to work under pressure, mental toughness, decision-making, personal initiative, teamwork, and professionalism are regularly mentioned by employers as desirable qualities of veterans. Previous researchers, however, have pointed out that such characteristics are examples of psychological—not human—capital (Luthans, 2006; Mann, 2012, as cited in DeGroat, 2016), and possessed by many people who have not served in the military.

Likewise, many civilians, including co-workers and supervisors, may not share a positive view of the nation's military and war policies. Thus, from a human capital perspective, it is important to refrain from making assumptions about the intrinsic worth of veterans within the general workforce. Human capital refers to the set of skills that a person gains on the job, through training and experience, which increases the employee's value for employer and worker alike.

Participants noted that, like many civilian employers, the mission and needs of each agency in the executive branch vary significantly, which complicates planning. While former military personnel may provide a good match for some openings at DOD, DHS, the VA, or Social Security, the skill set for positions at the National Science Foundation, Department of State, or the Department of Education may not. This was a legitimate concern for many agencies. Nevertheless, one senior leader we spoke with viewed this unease with great suspicion. To reiterate an earlier observation, "for every position, probably 97 percent of the openings on the civilian side have a defense counterpart and we should be able to bridge them more effectively" (personal communication, October 6, 2016).

Other senior-level officials we interviewed shared this sentiment, maintaining that even if some departments and program offices throughout the government had unique requirements, the know-how of highly experienced military leaders accustomed to leading and managing high-demand operations should make them highly employable. In practice, though, the opinions and motivations of executives can be quite detached from the viewpoints of employees, especially when leading a politically mandated initiative.

It is accurate to contend that many veterans do possess advanced managerial know-how (especially commissioned officers and senior non-commissioned officers). Service members who serve for less time, however, do not hold such experience but may be technically proficient in areas that are in demand by employers. An ongoing challenge for the VEI, therefore, is to assess how specific military-acquired skills can be matched with civilian jobs. For veterans lacking transferable skills, identifying educational and vocational pathways for additional training during and after transition from the service will remain important.

Most employers, including the federal government, use an exact set of competencies to define the needs for each position. In general, competency refers to hard and soft skill sets—the ability to meet organizational objectives through technical, financial, mechanical, or other system related means—or the ability to use interpersonal skills and personal qualities such as communication, leadership, and self-confidence to perform the job well. Each agency develops a set of competencies to direct hiring, training, workforce needs, and employee evaluation procedures (Bowman, West, & Beck, 2014).

To capitalize on the various competencies of veterans it will be necessary to project future workforce trends. Twenty-first century work is evolving swiftly, with some jobs becoming obsolete and others emerging during the transition to an information and service economy. These changes have led to a growing mismatch between individual skills and employer

needs, but they are not the only features reflecting rapid change. Although most people can be trained to perform advanced scientific and technical tasks, individual traits and the ability to adapt to the changing economy appear to make a significant difference when it comes to a person's capacity to excel (Bowman, West, & Beck, 2014; Burrus et. al, 2013; Rojewski & Hill, 2014).

Within the context of veteran employment, adaptability is a two-way street for employer and employee alike. As the economy changes, the workforce adapts. At the same time, however, employers seeking to employ veterans are forced to adapt to changing policies, workforce trends, and budgetary realities, among other areas of concern. This is a complex mix related to organizational management, strategic planning, and human capital. Human capital refers to the collective experience, intelligence, and expertise of those working to meet an organization's mission. It is a vital component of strategic planning (Liebowitz, 2004). If veteran employment programs are to meet the need of the government agencies and private-sector organizations, career development initiatives must incorporate an understanding of these complex dynamics. A growing body of empirical research indicates that human resource managers play crucial roles as management partners during the implementation of strategic decisions (Jacobson & Sowa, 2015).

As the VEI proceeds, the council should ensure that agency-level human resource leaders provide guidance and input related to skill alignment and the expansion of career development services for veterans. Research by the GAO indicates that by September 2017, approximately 31 percent of federal employees—a figure nearly identical to the total number of veterans in the workforce---will be eligible for retirement. Sustaining the number of qualified workers will create strategic challenges but will present a valuable opportunity to address recruitment, hiring, and retention concerns (Chambers, 2016; GAO, 2014).

Public-sector employment entails unique planning and policy requirements. Even so, knowledge gained from the private-sector research can be used to frame and improve analysis of governmental employment trends. Investigation of the crossover between these two sectors is needed to improve human capital management (Langbein & Stazyk, 2017). Establishing a collaborative process to gather expert opinions and lessons learned beyond government is a need consistently mentioned throughout our conversations with the VEI's leaders.

4.4.2 PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

FINDING: Private-sector engagement has been identified as an important component of strategic planning for the VEI. As such, public-private partnerships between federal agencies and the private sector have been successfully implemented through programs that address issues of social concern, providing strong precedent for the expansion of the initiative. Developing formal mechanisms to gather lessons learned from private-sector veteran hiring and employment initiatives can reinforce ongoing federal hiring and career development opportunities.

The VEI's overarching aim is to promote employment opportunities and career development for veterans, and provide an example for private sector employers to emulate and build upon. As articulated in E.O. 13518, "government as well as private employers should play a prominent role in helping veterans who may be struggling to find jobs." The impacts of the Great Recession, along with the high-tech skills needed to enter and sustain employment in today's civilian workforce, have led more veterans than ever to seek transition assistance (Levy, 2007 as cited in DeGroat, 2016). Various corporate programs focused on non-federal employment exist. Although private-sector employment programs are not part of the VEI, examining their efficacy can provide valuable lessons learned for the future of the initiative. Collaborative efforts focused on military transition and veteran employment between the federal government and private sector employers have evolved

their offerings to provide more personalized support through one-on-one counseling, extra follow-up, and separate tracks of training for those pursuing higher education, civilian employment, or business ownership (Faurer, Rogers-Brodersen, & Bailie, 2014, as cited in DeGroat, 2016).[6]

Our conversations with those who led and managed the implementation of the VEI indicated that engagement with civilian employers will be important as the program continues. It is unclear, however, to what specific degree the VEI has developed formal working relationships and collaborative mechanisms with corporations and other private employers. Interviews with chief human capital officers indicate that more attention regarding private sector employment programs is needed as the VEI moves to its next phase of development. It is not always clear how to connect the dots between government and private firms, as the institutional contexts are so diverse. Veteran employment, however, provides a common denominator around which innovation, learning and mutual pathways to provide services to veterans and their families can continue to take shape. To be clear, the aim of the VEI is not to focus on private sector employment. Creative avenues for joint action and lesson sharing, however, can lead to win-win outcomes for all involved. Examining human capital connections, labor market skills, education and vocational training, earnings, employment data, productivity, and related variables can inform ways to encourage cross-sectoral learning (Keefe, 2012).

Because so much knowledge is created and housed within organizations, setting up parameters that are conducive to learning requires the cross-fertilization of ideas. Planners aiming at building knowledge across institutional boundaries ask new questions to gain different or alternative perspectives. Insight is not generated automatically. Users must transmit and receive information, yet often obstacles interfere on both ends (Stiglitz & Greenwald, 2015). One such barrier is labor and employment policy itself, which has had limited legislative or political attention, partially due to a lack of national leadership. The upside is that proposals for new public job policies are plentiful, and many private, local, and regional-level innovations have been successful. Identifying a path toward a jobs compact is possible, but it will require high levels of coordination and collaboration among business, labor, education, government, and other interest groups that seek forward-looking employment policies and practices (Kochan, 2013).

Cooperation to address social concerns between government and business, educational institutions, and the nonprofit community has become common. On the surface, setting up public-partnerships seems fairly straightforward, but there are usually many pitfalls. Bringing groups together from different economic and institutional sectors involves a commitment of resources, time, and effort. Partnering companies and agencies may not have interacted previously, and the problems are almost always complex (Waddock, 1988). Fortunately, the need for workforce development is not a new trend. Private-sector employers have taken notice of the benefit of collaboration on providing economic development and ensuring a sufficient supply of skilled employees. A 2013 survey revealed that more than two-thirds of private-sector executives expressed a need after the Great Recession to invest in training and development to ensure workforce readiness (Mullins, Henderson, & Villa, 2016). Establishing trust and working relationships, however, takes time. Applying lessons learned from small-scale programs that have led to success, along with choosing the right partners, is a key part of planning (Waddock, 1988).

Companies participating in the Veteran Jobs Mission, for instance, have hired nearly 400,000 veterans and transitioning service members since 2011, highlighting the power of collective action. Scores of firms have developed robust military and veteran-facing programs, but like the public agencies taking part in the VEI, metrics and programs addressing retention, long-term performance, and career development are still lacking (Hall et. al, 2014; Schafer et. al, 2016).

Understanding how to operationalize such an approach is complex. Nearly 30 years of research on veteran employment suggests that veterans are resilient, can negotiate bumpy paths upon discharge and transition, and fare well in

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6. See, for example, Joining Forces, Onward to Opportunity, DOD Skillbridge, DOD Hiring Heroes Career Fairs, and DOL VETS).

civilian occupations. Yet, the evidence that has been put forth on veteran employment is inconsistent, due in part to methodological challenges related to selection bias, data constraints, and the broad scope of the issue itself (Kleykamp, 2012). The research community must take this into account to successfully inform human resource professionals working to set up public-private partnerships.

Since the VEI's overarching concern is to improve veteran hiring and retention in the federal government, developing a better collective understanding of the cultural barriers and gaps among transitioning service members, veterans, and civilian hiring managers may be particularly instructive (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006, as cited in DeGroat, 2016; Carter et. al, 2017). These gaps—real and perceived—are a commonly cited challenge among employers and veteran employment programs in the private sector. The VEI is no exception. Today's workforce simply has a declining share of veterans than that seen in preceding decades. Veteran representation in the C suite is also on a considerable decline—dropping from 59 percent in 1980 to just 6.2 percent by 2006 (Benmelech & Frydman, 2014).

Consequently, there is a diminished collective understanding of the value and skills veterans bring to the workplace. Geography plays a role, too. Because most active-duty military installations are concentrated away from the nation's population centers and clustered in five states (California, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia), civilians and employers experience little interaction with the military. If these trends continue, the divide between transitioning veterans and civilian employers will likely remain, if not grow, for the near future (Carter et. al, 2017).

The civil-military divide affects veterans as well, as they navigate new civilian careers. Beyond the difficulties associated with pursuing new employment, veterans, upon transition, often find that their civilian occupations do not provide the same sense of purpose as the military provides (a theme echoed in our interviews). This concern is thought to be a contributing factor to veteran job retention (Maury, Stone, & Roseman, 2014; Maury et. al, 2016). Likewise, the desire to serve is a primary reason why service members choose to stay on active duty, pursue government and civic-minded careers when they leave (Carter et. al, 2017), and maintain higher levels of civic engagement than their non-veteran peers during and post-service (Nesbit & Reingold, 2011; Tivald, 2016).

Despite veterans' high public-service motivation, our findings suggest there is still more to do to improve veteran hiring and retention in the federal government, especially beyond the traditional national security and law enforcement agencies. One telltale sign of innovative organizational strategies is that they recruit and retain highly skilled and trained people, provide them with access to knowledge, and then encourage and enable ways to break new ground (Serrat, 2017a). For individual veterans building new careers, possessing a strong identity backed by personal values, the capacity to adapt and being flexible can greatly shape the direction, potential, and attainment of one's career (Briscoe & Hall, 2006).

Opportunities remain to not only shape and streamline new career pathways, but also to leverage workforce development lessons learned and innovations between the governmental and private sectors in ways that advance a 21st century federal workforce. Precedent exists through established corporate partnerships for veterans. Several agencies within the federal government are operating corporate social responsibility programs that seek to provide assistance with labor and supply chain logistics, anticorruption, energy and the environment, health care, and other citizenship-related issues (Camilleri, 2017). The Department of Homeland Security, for example, relies heavily on alliances between government and business because over 85 percent of the nation's infrastructure is privately owned. An umbrella concept is used to enhance hiring, resource utilization, specialization, cross-sector relationships, and technological innovation (Busch & Givens, 2012). Drawing from existing public-private partnerships, consultation with subject-matter experts, and tapping into work in this area from the research community will serve as valuable resources going forward.

■ 4.5 CLOSING COMMENTS

It is important to note that implementation is a process of change that occurs in established work contexts. It rarely takes place on a simple, clean slate. As a result, to meet policy and program goals, a process of constant learning focused on meeting publicly desired outcomes must be developed (Sandfort & Moulton, 2014). Providing committed leadership, securing buy-in, establishing a purposeful strategy that links activities with outcomes, maintaining openness to change, and bringing core processes together are fundamental components for success (Birken, et. al, 2017; Sandfort & Moulton, 2014).

In recent years, public administrators have placed great emphasis on designing practices and tools to support decision-making through rigorous ways of defining, quantifying, and improving performance (Rutgers, 2015). Similarly, E.O. 13518 requires the council to develop such measures "to assess the effectiveness of, and submit an annual report to the president on the status of, the Veterans Employment Initiative." The VEI's metrics led to a meaningful degree of success with meeting its initial hiring goals, but the council has not carried out the preparation steps that are needed to align the use of metrics with the full scope of its policy objectives.

Explaining why a program is operating and performing as it is can be a particularly useful part of any implementation assessment. When a program, such as the VEI, is entirely new, or without a set of performance criteria or direct previous experience against which it may be appraised, researchers may need to call upon prior knowledge to chart a way forward (Werner, 2004). Focusing on end users, such as executive decision-makers examining policy outcomes, managers and teams looking to improve overall program quality or stakeholders working to meet program objectives can lead to improved delivery of services (Peters et. al. 2013). This implementation has proceeded accordingly.

Interviews with key insiders—supplemented by results from surveys of chief human capital officers and career-level federal employees—indicate that federal agencies are ready to move the initiative to its next phase. The concluding chapter presents a series of recommendations for the future direction of the VEI.

CHAPTER 5 | CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

■ 5.1 OVERVIEW

Strategic planning is an ordered effort to make fundamental assessments, decisions, and actions to structure and guide the allocation of resources. One of the main challenges of the VEI is to facilitate cooperation among a wide range of stakeholders who may differ on what course of actions will maximize public value. It involves a complex process of leadership, management, and policy governance that engages the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Strategic planning for veteran employment aims not only to produce a public value, but also to create a return for these stakeholders on the organizational investments they are making.

The collective capacity of organizations is dependent on relational networks among individual employees, business or program units, and the wider organization. Broadly speaking, assessing and developing human capital is a main goal for all organizations. An important function for any human resource management team is to engage in the complex process of recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining productive employees. Many of the dynamics related to human capital—such as experience, skills, training, education, knowledge management, and career development—go beyond the attributes of individuals (Hollenbeck & Jamieson, 2015).

To enhance the value added by veteran employees, we must learn more about the attitudes, performance, and motivation of veterans working in the federal service (Vanderschure, 2016). At the same time, employers must discover the best ways to acquire, deploy, and develop talent in a way that is good for both veterans and employers (Haynie, 2016). Human resource management systems have been enhanced by an emerging body of work that embraces systems thinking and strategic objectives (Jackson, Schuler, & Jiang, 2014).

While efficiency has been a main concern for decades, creating public value has become a common theme for public managers in recent years (Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2014). Adding value has different meanings in different organizational contexts, but it always involves gathering information to foster innovation and learning. Drawing from extensive application in the private sector, government has increasingly realized that strategic planning can be enhanced when learning processes among policymakers cut across traditional boundaries (Kuosa, 2016). This involves going outside through collaborative planning and partnerships, and going inside by incorporating the workforce into the innovation process (Ojasalo, Koskelo, & Nousiainen, 2015).

Organizations must determine what factors are most valuable for the long run and which issues need to be overcome in the short run (Laursen & Thorlund, 2016). To support innovation and learning, planners who are familiar with the inner

workings of the initiative ask a series of critical questions that help the workforce focus on the key factors for success. In turn, developing action steps to address these core factors will determine the ways that resources can be marshaled to achieve desired outcomes (Parmenter, 2015).

The following series of recommendations are provided to shape the VEI's strategic planning process.

▪ 5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL ON VETERANS EMPLOYMENT

○ **Provide dedicated and sustained leadership** to ensure that agency representatives possess the necessary authority to remain engaged with the goals and objectives identified by the council. Establish and maintain political support at the highest level possible—preferably the vice president. Designate an executive director to support the administrative management and supervision of the council's activities.

○ In consultation with OPM and the council, **direct and oversee the development of a coordinated strategic planning process** to address the findings and lessons learned that emerged from the implementation assessment. Provide agency leaders with the resources and expertise needed to research, design, and implement an improved performance measurement system throughout the 24 agencies participating in the VEI.

○ To advance the strategic aims of the VEI, **establish a formal outreach process with veteran employment coalitions** such as the Department of Defense's (DoD) Hiring Heroes Program, DoD Operation Warfighter, and the private sector's Hiring Our Heroes and The Veteran Jobs Mission initiatives. In consultation with OPM and the Department of Defense, expand the DoD SkillBridge initiative to enable federal agencies to participate as employers. Provide training and internships to transitioning service members and take action to ensure that federal agencies participate in the initiative. Extract and apply lessons learned from the implementation assessment to determine how other federal initiatives (such as Transition GPS, DOL VETS, The DoD Hiring Heroes Program, and the VA's vocational rehabilitation and employment programs) can support private-sector partnerships.

▪ 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OPM AND HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS

○ In cooperation with the council, OPM, and agency and department heads, **consult with subject-matter experts** in industrial and organizational psychology, public management, and veteran-focused social science research **to develop a planning framework to achieve desired agency outcomes** through innovation, learning, and workforce intelligence. Continue to align and enhance the hiring, onboarding, and retention of veterans in accordance with the strategic planning process.

○ **Develop a comprehensive plan to identify the most effective means to translate the military-acquired skills, education, and competencies of veterans for civilian employment.** Consult with vocational counselors, educational specialists, and human resources managers to provide employment pathways for transitioning service members and veterans. Address gaps with skills and education through military transition and federal career development programs.

○ **Design a tailored, data-driven performance management system** to guide goal setting, action steps, and resource allocation for the next phase of the VEI. Connect the development of metrics and reporting procedures with organizational learning outcomes and VEI objectives developed through the strategic planning process. Measure

performance against the entire employment picture, not merely through statistics based on hiring, onboarding, and retention. If feasible within budgetary constraints, develop an information technology system for use by OPM and agency Veteran Employment Program Offices to support data analysis and reporting requirements.

○ **Conduct a targeted assessment to determine how human resource professionals can address differing views related to civil-military culture within the workforce** and how gaps in understanding and opinions may be impacting perceptions of fairness, diversity, and inclusion. Reflecting a general trend within previous research findings, interviews with chief human capital officers reveal significant differences in views regarding hiring preference, special hiring authorities, and employment advantages for veterans. Data gathered from a survey of federal employees also reinforces this finding.

■ 5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AGENCY AND DEPARTMENT HEADS

○ **Identify key occupations, skills, licenses, and professional certifications that support agency-specific workforce needs and align them with established career skills programs and other established workforce readiness initiatives for transitioning military and veterans.** Provide job training opportunities and internships in cooperation with council Initiatives, DoD Skillbridge, DOL VETS, the VA Vocational Rehabilitation, or other federal programs for transitioning service members and veterans. Develop veterans counseling and training programs to focus on matching veterans' skills and aspirations to high-demand federal occupations projected to have heavy recruitment needs.

○ In cooperation with OPM and the council, **assess and identify human capital requirements in support of VEI strategic planning objectives.** Develop performance indicators to measure and evaluate core processes related to mission-critical needs and how to hire, retain, and develop veterans to meet those needs. Formalize and implement an agency-wide system to align performance measurement and evaluation procedures with workforce readiness, vocational alignment, and career development objectives.

○ **Ensure veteran employment program offices are fully staffed and resourced.** Continue to identify learning and resource sharing opportunities with other VEPOs, particularly between well-resourced and under-resourced agencies. Apply and make use of veteran hiring authorities and the various flexibilities they afford to more effectively meet veteran employment objectives. Ensure that VEPO staffs are dedicated to identifying jobs that provide a good fit for veterans.

○ **Ensure that agency heads and their deputies provide dedicated and sustained commitment to VEI requirements,** including full participation in council and steering committee meetings, trainings, and internal veteran-related employment activities. In cooperation with OPM and the council, develop and maintain partnerships with other government agencies, veteran service organizations, colleges, universities, and private-sector institutions engaged with the VEI.

○ **Conduct, in cooperation with OPM and the Council, an agency assessment of employee, managerial, and executive-level perceptions and knowledge gaps in current veteran employment policies and hiring preference rules**. Study participants expressed widespread dissatisfaction concerning regulations related to veterans' preference. HR professionals and senior-level agency leaders have also called for greater awareness and expertise of veteran hiring rules, compliance, and transparency.

■ 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

An implementation assessment examines the mechanisms, resources, and interactions that connect policies to program action. Implementation proceeds through unavoidable changes in political leadership, governmental actions, economic conditions, and institutional environments. Consequently, when policies and plans are enacted, they do not always operate as projected or provide intended outcomes. New initiatives typically require the capacity to adapt strategies to organizational conditions, programmatic uncertainties, unexpected barriers, and resource limitations. Although policy implementation is a highly decentralized process that occurs at multiple levels, assessments tend to ignore or simplify the processes of adjustment that are needed to improve results (Calista, 1994; Love, 2004, as cited in Bhuyan, Jorgensen, & Sharma, 2010; Moulton & Sandfort, 2017; O'Toole 1986).

The research community is well positioned to identify these requirements by addressing gaps within the current body of knowledge. Studies on veteran employment, including analysis of veterans' preference, has been limited to a small community of experts within academia, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. In some cases, analysts working in private firms have contributed to the growing collection of publications and reports that have emerged in recent years. In general, however, our collective examination of this subject matter is still in a nascent stage of development.

Many potential reasons for the blind spots exist, including but not limited to the civil-military divide and low percentages of Americans who serve in the military, inconsistent levels of political attention to veterans' issues, competing governmental priorities, funding challenges, or greater institutional support for more traditional areas of inquiry within the medical, social work, and public health fields. Since veterans regularly cite employment and career-specific concerns as top priorities, and, in light of the findings that surfaced from this implementation assessment, a comprehensive research agenda should be developed.

Along these lines, this concluding section of the report has two aims—first, to identify specific areas for future research on veteran employment and, second, to articulate and describe the need for an integrative strategic planning framework that links performance measures with ongoing policy objectives.

Drawing from the overall study, recommendations for future research follow.

○ Additional research is needed to develop veteran-specific human resource strategies for public- and private-sector organizations. In relation to workforce alignment and career development, veterans comprise roughly 30 percent of individuals working in the federal civil service. Although some recent studies have addressed the alignment and transferability of military-acquired skills, investigation of the retention, turnover, performance, and satisfaction of recently transitioned and longer-term veteran employees has been limited.

○ Interdisciplinary projects that examine the efficacy of veteran-related policies on workforce diversity would provide a valuable contribution, as they have been largely infrequent and narrow in scope. Although the impact of veteran hiring on general workforce demographics has been quantified, few scholars have explored the relationships between veterans' hiring preference, civil-military culture, and workforce diversity and composition. Also, while the related civil-military gap—referring to sociological, cultural, attitudinal, and experiential divisions between the military and civilian society—is a widely studied topic, only a few studies have analyzed this topic within the context of veteran employment, public policy, and broader human capital concerns.

○ Pursue in-depth case studies, practical applications, and government-wide lesson sharing of agency-level practices in veteran hiring, retention, and performance. Also, examine and adapt internally, as applicable, learnings and HR-related strategies pursued in private sector-led and public-private partnerships that promote veteran workforce readiness, training and education, and employment.

○ An integrative planning framework is needed to organize and apply the lessons learned from the implementation assessment. Additional investigation and planning are also needed to guide development of the VEI's next comprehensive strategy and performance management system. This implementation assessment, though comprehensive, also has limitations. Just as performance data varied by agency, study participation varied by agency too. The most effective strategies, however, are not based on a one-size-fits-all methodical approach. Instead, as this study emphasizes, innovation—based on informal processes and strategic thinking—will help agency leaders and HR professional develop tailored approaches that maximize veteran talent to meet their specific human capital needs.

5

EXECUTIVE ORDER 13518

58533

Presidential Documents

Title 3—

The President

Executive Order 13518 of November 9, 2009

Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government

By the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 301 of title 3 of the United States Code, I hereby order as follows:

Section 1. *Policy.* Veterans have served and sacrificed in defense of our Nation. When they complete their service, we must do everything in our power to assist them in re-entering civilian life and finding employment. Government as well as private employers should play a prominent role in helping veterans who may be struggling to find jobs. As one of the Nation's leading employers, the Federal Government is in need of highly skilled individuals to meet agency staffing needs and to support mission objectives. Our veterans, who have benefited from training and development during their military service, possess a wide variety of skills and experiences, as well as the motivation for public service, that will help fulfill Federal agencies' staffing needs. It is therefore the policy of my Administration to enhance recruitment of and promote employment opportunities for veterans within the executive branch, consistent with merit system principles and veterans' preferences prescribed by law. The Federal Government will thereby help lead by example in promoting veterans' employment.

Sec. 2. *Council on Veterans Employment.* There is hereby established an interagency Council on Veterans Employment (Council), to be co-chaired by the Secretaries of Labor and Veterans Affairs. The Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) shall serve as Vice Chair of the Council.

(a) Mission and Function of the Council. The Council shall:

(i) advise and assist the President and the Director of OPM in establishing a coordinated Government-wide effort to increase the number of veterans employed by the Federal Government by enhancing recruitment and training;

(ii) serve as a national forum for promoting veterans' employment opportunities in the executive branch; and

(iii) establish performance measures to assess the effectiveness of, and submit an annual report to the President on the status of, the Veterans Employment Initiative described in section 3 of this order.

(b) Membership of the Council. The Council shall consist of the heads of the following agencies and such other executive branch agencies as the President may designate:

(i) the Department of State;

(ii) the Department of the Treasury;

(iii) the Department of Defense;

(iv) the Department of Justice;

(v) the Department of the Interior;

(vi) the Department of Agriculture;

(vii) the Department of Commerce;

(viii) the Department of Labor;

(ix) the Department of Health and Human Services;

(x) the Department of Housing and Urban Development;

(xi) the Department of Transportation;

(xii) the Department of Energy;

(xiii) the Department of Education;

(xiv) the Department of Veterans Affairs;

(xv) the Department of Homeland Security;

(xvi) the Environmental Protection Agency;

(xvii) the National Aeronautics and Space Administration;

(xviii) the Agency for International Development;

(xix) the General Services Administration;

(xx) the National Science Foundation;

(xxi) the Nuclear Regulatory Commission;

(xxii) the Office of Personnel Management;

(xxiii) the Small Business Administration; and

(xxiv) the Social Security Administration.

A member of the Council may designate, to perform the Council functions of the member, a senior official who is part of the member's agency, and who is a full-time officer or employee of the Federal Government.

(c) Administration of the Council. The Co-Chairs shall convene meetings of the Council, determine its agenda, and direct its work. At the direction of the Co-Chairs, the Council may establish subgroups consisting exclusively of Council members or their designees, as appropriate. The Vice Chair shall designate an Executive Director for the Council to support the Vice Chair in managing the Council's activities. The OPM shall provide administrative support for the Council to the extent permitted by law and within existing appropriations.

(d) Steering Committee. There is established within the Council a Steering Committee consisting of the Secretaries of Defense, Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, the Director of OPM, and any other Council member designated by the Co-Chairs. The Steering Committee shall be responsible for providing leadership, accountability, and strategic direction to the Council.

Sec. 3. *Veterans Employment Initiative.* The agencies represented on the Council shall participate in a Veterans Employment Initiative (Initiative). Under the Initiative, each participating agency shall, to the extent permitted by law:

(a) develop an agency-specific Operational Plan for promoting employment opportunities for veterans, consistent with the Government-wide Veterans Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan described in section 4 of this order, merit system principles, the agency's strategic human capital plan, and other applicable workforce planning strategies and initiatives;

(b) within 120 days of the date of this order, establish a Veterans Employment Program Office, or designate an agency officer or employee with full-time responsibility for its Veterans Employment Program, to be responsible for enhancing employment opportunities for veterans within the agency, consistent with law and merit system principles, including developing and implementing the agency's Operational Plan, veterans recruitment programs, and training programs for veterans with disabilities, and for coordinating employment counseling to help match the career aspirations of veterans to the needs of the agency;

(c) provide mandatory annual training to agency human resources personnel and hiring managers concerning veterans' employment, including training on veterans' preferences and special authorities for the hiring of veterans;

(d) identify key occupations for which the agency will provide job counseling and training to better enable veterans to meet agency staffing needs associated with those occupations; and

(e) coordinate with the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to promote further development and application of technology designed to assist transitioning service members and veterans with disabilities.

Sec. 4. *Additional Responsibilities of the Director of the Office of Personnel Management.* The Director of OPM shall, in consultation with the Council and to the extent permitted by law:

(a) develop a Government-wide Veterans Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan, to be updated at least every 3 years, addressing barriers to the employment of veterans in the executive branch and focusing on:

(i) identifying actions that agency leaders should take to improve employment opportunities for veterans;

(ii) developing the skills of transitioning military service members and veterans;

(iii) marketing the Federal Government as an employer of choice to transitioning service members and veterans;

(iv) marketing the talent, experience, and dedication of transitioning service members and veterans to Federal agencies; and

(v) disseminating Federal employment information to veterans and hiring officials;

(b) provide Government-wide leadership in recruitment and employment of veterans in the executive branch;

(c) identify key occupations, focusing on positions in high-demand occupations where talent is needed to meet Government-wide staffing needs, for which the Federal Government will provide job counseling and training under section 5(a) of this order to veterans and transitioning military service personnel;

(d) develop mandatory training for both human resources personnel and hiring managers on veterans' employment, including veterans' preference and special hiring authorities;

(e) compile and post on the OPM website Government-wide statistics on the hiring of veterans; and
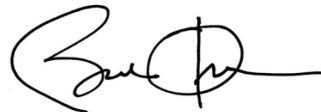
(f) within 1 year of the date of this order and with the advice of the Council, provide recommendations to the President on improving the ability of veterans' preference laws to meet the needs of the new generation of veterans, especially those transitioning from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the needs of Federal hiring officials.

Sec. 5. *Responsibilities of the Secretaries of Defense, Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security.* The Secretaries of Defense, Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security shall take the following actions, to the extent permitted by law:

(a) The Secretaries of Defense, Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security shall, in consultation with OPM, develop and implement counseling and training programs to align veterans' and transitioning service members' skills and career aspirations to Federal employment opportunities, targeting Federal occupations that are projected to have heavy recruitment needs.

(b) The Secretary of Labor shall conduct employment workshops for veterans and transitioning military service personnel as part of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), and integrate in those workshops information about

(i) reinforce military leadership's commitment and support of the service members' transition process; and

(ii) institute policies that encourage every eligible service member to take the opportunity to enroll in any or all of the four components of the TAP.

(d) The Secretaries of Labor and Veterans Affairs shall:

(i) assist veterans and transitioning service members in translating military skills, training, and education to Federal occupations through programs developed under subsection (a) of this section; and

(ii) provide training to employment and rehabilitation counselors on the Federal hiring process, veterans' preferences, special hiring authorities, and identifying Federal employment opportunities for veterans.

Sec. 6. *General Provisions.* (a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) authority granted by law to a department or agency or the head thereof; or

(ii) functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
November 9, 2009.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS
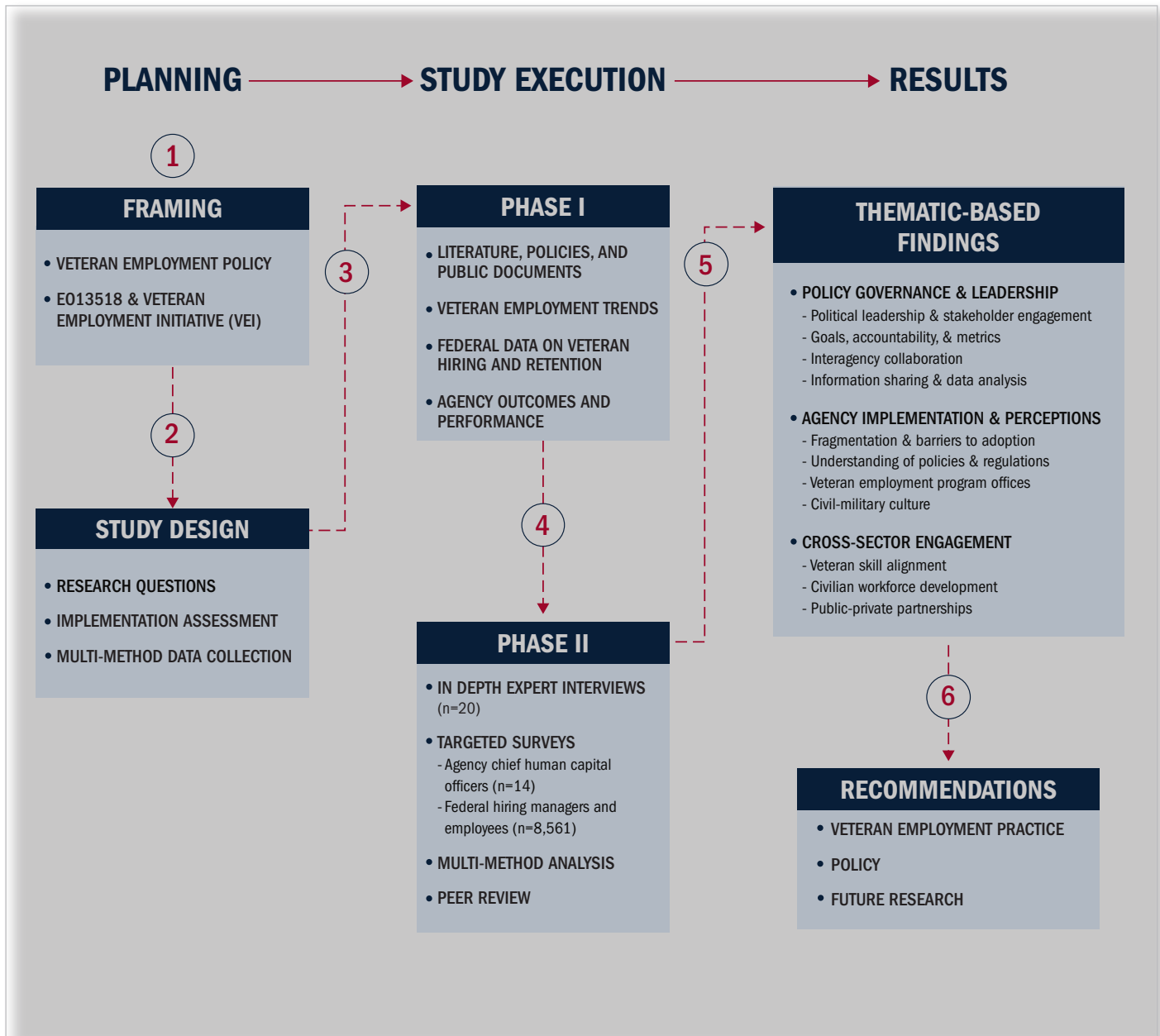
TERMS

BLS	Bureau of Labor Statistics
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CHCO	Chief Human Capital Officer
CNAS	Center for a New American Security
EO	Executive Order
FEVS	Federal Employment Viewpoint Survey
FY	Fiscal Year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GS	General Schedule
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
IVMF	Institute for Veterans and Military Families
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
MSPB	Merit Systems Protection Board
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
ROI	Return on Investment
SES	Senior Executive Service
TAP	Transition Assistance Program
U.S.C.	United States Code
VEI	Veterans Employment Initiative
VEOA	Veterans Employment Opportunities Act
VEPO	Veteran Employment Program Office
VETS	Veterans Employment Training Service
VRA	Veterans Recruitment Act

AGENCIES

DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOC	Department of Commerce
DOD	Department of Defense
DOE	Department of Energy
DOI	Department of the Interior
DOJ	Department of Justice
DOL	Department of Labor
DOS	Department of State
DOT	Department of Transportation
ED	Department of Education
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
GSA	General Services Administration
HHS	Health and Human Services
HUD	Housing and Urban Development
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NRC	Nuclear Regulatory Commission
NSF	National Science Foundation
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
SBA	Small Business Administration
SSA	Social Security Administration
TREAS	Department of the Treasury
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	Department of Agriculture
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs

RESEARCH STUDY CONCEPT MAP

PLANNING → **STUDY EXECUTION** → **RESULTS**

C

①

FRAMING

- VETERAN EMPLOYMENT POLICY
- EO13518 & VETERAN EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE (VEI)

②

③

STUDY DESIGN

- RESEARCH QUESTIONS
- IMPLEMENTATION ASSESSMENT
- MULTI-METHOD DATA COLLECTION

PHASE I

- LITERATURE, POLICIES, AND PUBLIC DOCUMENTS
- VETERAN EMPLOYMENT TRENDS
- FEDERAL DATA ON VETERAN HIRING AND RETENTION
- AGENCY OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE

④

PHASE II

- IN DEPTH EXPERT INTERVIEWS (n=20)
- TARGETED SURVEYS
  - Agency chief human capital officers (n=14)
  - Federal hiring managers and employees (n=8,561)
- MULTI-METHOD ANALYSIS
- PEER REVIEW

⑤

THEMATIC-BASED FINDINGS

- POLICY GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP
  - Political leadership & stakeholder engagement
  - Goals, accountability, & metrics
  - Interagency collaboration
  - Information sharing & data analysis

- AGENCY IMPLEMENTATION & PERCEPTIONS
  - Fragmentation & barriers to adoption
  - Understanding of policies & regulations
  - Veteran employment program offices
  - Civil-military culture

- CROSS-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT
  - Veteran skill alignment
  - Civilian workforce development
  - Public-private partnerships

⑥

RECOMMENDATIONS

- VETERAN EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE
- POLICY
- FUTURE RESEARCH

INTERVIEW MATERIALS

INTERVIEW #	ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION*	INTERVIEW DATE
1	Office of Personnel Management (OPM)	May 17, 2016
2	Office of Personnel Management (OPM)	June 7, 2016
3	Office of Personnel Management (OPM)	July 12, 2016
4	Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	July 12, 2016
5**	Department of Education (ED)	July 25, 2016
6	Department of Defense (DOD)	August 17, 2016
7	Department of Homeland Security (DHS)	August 18, 2016
8	Department of Homeland Security (DHS)	September 14, 2016
9	Office of Personnel Management (OPM)	October 6, 2016
10	Office of Personnel Management (OPM)	October 12, 2016
11	Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	November 16, 2016
12	Department of Labor (DOL)	November 18, 2016
13	Department of Labor (DOL)	January 20, 2017
14	Veteran Services Organization (VSO)	January 25, 2017
15**	Veteran Services Organization (VSO)	February 2, 2017
16	Veteran Services Organization (VSO)	February 2, 2017
17	United States Agency for International Development (AID)	August 31, 2017
18	National Science Foundation (NSF)	September 8, 2017

* For government participants, reflects current affiliation or most recent affiliation before leaving the federal service.
** Interview involved two participants.

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

BACKGROUND
1. Tell us a little about your background and the federal agency or agencies you work or have worked for?
2. When and how did you become involved in the Veterans Employment Initiative?
   Please describe your role from the outset and how it may have evolved since.

THE EARLY YEARS: LAUNCHING THE VEI AND COUNCIL
3. In your view, what precipitated the need for the Veterans Employment Initiative?
4. Please tell us your story of how the VEI unfolded in the early years.
   a. Your understanding of the intended vision of the EO and Initiative?
   b. Role of the Council on Veterans Employment?
   c. How was this received among the participating agencies? Who were the early adopters?
   d. Any challenges early on? To what extent have they been overcome?
   e. Any quick wins or notable accomplishments in the early years?

COUNCIL IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE
5. Re: Council and agency-level performance – please tell us how this was determined. What specifically was intended to be measured?
   Did/does this process account for or accommodate natural differences (size, budget, mission, age, etc.) across agencies?
6. Please tell us about the strategic planning process, your role in shaping that, and how that seems to be going.
7. Your satisfaction with the council's overall governance and planning processes? What's working well or needs increased attention
8. Your satisfaction with the council's performance? Have the intended goals and outcomes set by the initiative been met? In your opinion, what are some of the most important outcomes that the council has achieved?

AGENCY IMPLEMENTATION
9. Please tell us your agency's story in implementing the EO. How is it going?
   a. Veteran Employment Program Office?
   b. Other internal steps taken re: recruiting, development, and retention?
10. Any lessons learned or practices to share?
11. Remaining challenges?
12. Please tell us about your agency's interactions with other agency veteran employment offices and the broader council.

INTER/INTRA-AGENCY COLLABORATION
13. Outside of regular council and steering committee meetings, what is your sense for how agencies (veteran program offices) are interacting and sharing information on their veteran employment initiatives?
    a. On what topic(s)? How frequent?
    b. Has this evolved over time since the 2009?
14. There are many federal programs (DoD TAP/TGPS and Skillbridge, DoL Job Centers, VA Economic Communities, SBA Boots to Business) focused on veteran employment.
    a. To what extent have VEI and the council been integrated with these other efforts?
    b. What are your views on how the U.S. government coordinates these various efforts? Any recommendations for the future?
15. In your view, what is the best way for agencies to promote useful collaboration, learning, and transfer of expertise?
16. What role, if any, should the initiative and council members play in engaging agency field offices outside of Washington, D.C.?

CLOSING
17. What does the future of the council look like?
    a. Should priorities change or remain steady?
    b. Other thought beyond hiring – retention, development, and workplace performance?
18. Any other concerns? What about the upcoming election? Council or agency turnover?
19. Any recommendations or changes that you would like to see/expect to take place?
20. Knowing what you know now, would you have done something differently?
21. Anything I didn't ask that you think would be valuable to know?

D

Informed Consent Form

TITLE OF STUDY: IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW OF THE PRESIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE ORDER (EO) 13518

We are researchers at Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) inviting you to participate in a research study. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to participate or not, or opt out at any time. This document explains the study to you; please feel free to ask questions about the research if you have any. We will be happy to explain anything in detail if you wish. After reading this document, please sign both copies of this form and keep one copy for your records if you decide to participate. Also, please feel free to ask questions about the research if you have any. This conversation will take approximately 60 minutes.

Purpose of Research:

Researchers at the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) are gathering information from the 24 federal agencies covered under E.O. 13518 to determine to what extent federal agencies have met their obligations under the Veterans' Employment Initiative (Initiative). This study is a formal review of E.O. 13518's implementation over its six-year lifespan. We are interested in learning more about your role and work in establishing the Council on Veterans' Employment (council) as well as practices of your agency to increase the employment of veterans. We are collecting this information solely to learn about and improve the outcomes of the council and the employment of veterans in the federal government. In participating in this survey, your input will be invaluable in helping us understand shared challenges and success strategies in veterans' employment. A final report on the notable findings, lessons learned, and best practices will be presented to Office of Personnel Management and the Council on Veterans Employment.

Benefits of Participating:

While there are no individual benefits, your contribution to this study will benefit in understanding the best implementation practices of E.O. 13518.

Confidentiality and Voluntary Participation:

All information from this interview will be kept confidential. No information linked to any specific individual will be shared externally at any point. All information will be stored and analyzed in a secured fashion. This means that no one besides Nicholas Armstrong, Zach Huitink, Fitore Hyseni, Jud Murchie, Ryan Van Slyke, and our transcription service, Datagain Inc., (partnered under a non-disclosure agreement) will have access to any audio recordings, transcripts, or notes resulting from this interview. Your name and identity will never be disclosed at any time, including any published reports or articles we may write from this study. The data resulting from this research will be reported to OPM and the council—but without any unique or identifying personal information.

Audio Recording:

We are digitally recording this session to ensure the greatest accuracy of your contribution to the study. We will transcribe each audio file for data analysis purposes, replacing your name with a number so that the transcript is not directly attributable to you. Both the audio files and transcripts will be carefully stored in a password-protected drive maintained by our research institute. Upon completion of this study, we will erase all audio files and retain the nameless transcripts.

Voluntary Participation and Potential Risks:

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may stop participating at any time without penalty. You do not have to answer any questions that you prefer not to, and you may withdraw at any time without consequence. The overall risk to participants is minimal, though it is mainly employment-related, such that if a participant offers unfavorable information about their employer or organization

that is directly attributable to them, there is a possibility that it could harm their employment standing. This risk, however, is mitigated by maintaining all participants' confidentiality in any publications that follow from this study, as described above.

Available Sources of Information:

If you have concerns or complaints about your rights as a participant, please contact the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board at 315. 443.3013. For more information about this study, please contact IVMF Senior Director of Research and Policy Dr. Nicholas J. Armstrong at 315.443.2033 or narmstro@syr.edu. If at a later time you wish to provide additional comments, you may contact Fitore Hyseni at fhyseni@syr.edu.

AUTHORIZATION:

I have read and understand this consent form and I volunteer to participate in this research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form. I voluntarily choose to participate, but I understand that my consent does not take away any of my legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this study. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable federal, state, or local laws.

All of my questions have been answered, I am over the age of 18, and I wish to participate in this research study. I have received a copy of this consent form.

___ I agree to be audio taped.
___ I do not agree to be audio taped.

_____   _____
Signature of participant   Date

_____   _____
Printed name of participant

_____   _____
Signature of researcher   Date

_____
Printed name of researcher

SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

Survey 1 – E.O. 13518 SURVEY – CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICERS

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES
JPMorgan Chase & Co., Founding Partner

FEDERAL CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER SURVEY:
Implementation of the Veterans Employment Initiative

1. Consent Form - Executive Order 13518/Veterans Employment Initiative Surveys

Thank you for participating in the Executive Order 13518/Veterans Employment Initiative Survey being conducted by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) in partnership with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The purpose of this survey is to gather information on your perspectives regarding veterans' employment in the federal government and the Veterans Employment Initiative. Because this data has not been previously captured, the survey will provide insight into how federal leaders can best promote veterans' employment in the federal civil service.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized.

The procedure involves completing an online survey that will take approximately 20 minutes (or longer depending on your responses). Your responses will be confidential and we do not collect identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address. The survey questions will be about your perspectives regarding veterans' employment in the federal government and the Veterans Employment Initiative, as well as some demographic information that is not personally identifiable. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you, and all data is stored in a password protected electronic format. However, please note: whenever one works with email or the internet there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality and/or anonymity. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology being used. It is important for you to understand that no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the internet by third parties.

Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated and the results will go toward helping federal government leaders identify how best to promote veterans' employment in the federal government.

At any point you may choose not to answer a question. You may also contact Rosalinda V. Maury, the director of applied research and analytics at the IVMF, if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the study. She can be reached via email at rvmaury@syr.edu or by phone at 315-443-0172. This research has been reviewed according to Syracuse University Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures for research involving human subjects. You may contact the IRB at (315) 443.3013, and reference project #16-140, if you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, if you have questions, concerns or complaints that you wish to address to someone other than the investigator, or if you cannot reach the investigator.

Clicking on the "Agree" option below indicates that:
• You have read the above information
• You voluntarily agree to participate
• You are at least 18 years of age

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records.

Please click on the "Next" button at the bottom of the page to continue. For the remainder of the survey, please do not use the back button on your browser, but instead use the "Back" and "Next" buttons on the bottom right-hand side of the page.

○ Yes
○ No

If respondent answers "No," they exit the survey. Otherwise they continue.

2. Are you a Chief Human Capital Officer?

○ Yes
○ No

If respondent answers "No," they exit the survey. Otherwise they continue.

3. How have you been involved with the Veterans Employment Initiative? Check all that apply.

○ Served on the Council on Veterans Employment
○ Served on the Council on Veterans Employment Steering Committee
○ Implemented Veterans Employment Initiative in my department/agency
○ Other (please specify)

4. Please rate your level of involvement with the following aspects of the Veterans Employment Initiative

	NOT AT ALL INVOLVED	SLIGHTLY INVOLVED	SOMEWHAT INVOLVED	MODERATELY INVOLVED	HEAVILY INVOLVED	NOT AWARE OF THIS INITIATIVE
Establishing performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the Veterans Employment Initiative	○	○	○	○	○	○
Creating an agency-specific Operational Plan for promoting employment opportunities for veterans	○	○	○	○	○	○
Establishing a Veterans Employment Program Office in your department/agency	○	○	○	○	○	○
Overseeing the designated veterans' employment official in your department/agency	○	○	○	○	○	○
Providing mandatory annual trainings for HR personnel and hiring managers concerning veterans' employment	○	○	○	○	○	○
Identifying key occupations for which your department/ agency provides job training and counseling to veterans to meet staffing needs associated with those occupations	○	○	○	○	○	○
Coordinating with DOD and VA to promote further development and application of technology designed to assist transitioning service members and veterans with disabilities	○	○	○	○	○	○

5. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
The goals of the Veterans Employment Initiative are appropriate	○	○	○	○	○	○
The Veterans Employment Initiative has an effective implementation strategy	○	○	○	○	○	○
The structure of the Council on Veterans Employment is appropriate in terms of:						
Leadership	○	○	○	○	○	○
Membership	○	○	○	○	○	○
Authority	○	○	○	○	○	○
The structure of the Council on Veterans Employment Steering Committee is appropriate in terms of:						
Leadership	○	○	○	○	○	○
Membership	○	○	○	○	○	○
Authority	○	○	○	○	○	○

6. To what extent have the following aspects of the Veterans Employment Initiative been implemented in your department/agency?

	NOT AT ALL INVOLVED	SLIGHTLY INVOLVED	SOMEWHAT INVOLVED	MODERATELY INVOLVED	HEAVILY INVOLVED	NOT AWARE OF THIS INITIATIVE
Performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the Veterans Employment Initiative	○	○	○	○	○	○
An agency-specific Operational Plan for promoting employment opportunities for veterans	○	○	○	○	○	○
A Veterans Employment Program Office	○	○	○	○	○	○
A designated veterans' employment official in your department/agency	○	○	○	○	○	○
Mandatory annual trainings for HR personnel and hiring managers concerning veterans' employment	○	○	○	○	○	○
Lists of key occupations for which your department/agency provides job training and counseling to veterans to meet staffing needs associated with those occupations	○	○	○	○	○	○
Coordination with DOD and VA to promote further development and application of technology designed to assist transitioning service members and veterans with disabilities	○	○	○	○	○	○

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7. How difficult has it been to implement the following aspects of the Veterans Employment Initiative in your department/agency?

	VERY DIFFICULT	MODERATELY DIFFICULT	SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT	SLIGHTLY DIFFICULT	NOT AT ALL DIFFICULT	DON'T KNOW
Performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the Veterans Employment Initiative	○	○	○	○	○	○
An agency-specific Operational Plan for promoting employment opportunities for veterans	○	○	○	○	○	○
A Veterans Employment Program Office	○	○	○	○	○	○
A designated veterans' employment official in your department/agency	○	○	○	○	○	○
Mandatory annual trainings for HR personnel and hiring managers concerning veterans' employment	○	○	○	○	○	○
Lists of key occupations for which your department/agency provides job training and counseling to veterans to meet staffing needs associated with those occupations	○	○	○	○	○	○
Coordination with DOD and VA to promote further development and application of technology designed to assist transitioning service members and veterans with disabilities	○	○	○	○	○	○

8. To what extent has your department/agency collaborated with other departments/agencies in implementing the Veterans Employment Initiative?
- ○ Not at all
- ○ Slightly
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Moderately
- ○ Heavily
- ○ Don't know

If respondent answers "Not at all" or "Don't know," they move to question 11.
If respondent answers "Slightly" OR "Somewhat" OR "Moderately" OR "Heavily," they are asked questions 9 and 10.

9. How difficult has it been to collaborate with other departments/agencies in implementing the Veterans Employment Initiative?
- ○ Very Difficult
- ○ Moderately Difficult
- ○ Somewhat Difficult
- ○ Slightly Difficult
- ○ Not at All Difficult

10. In general, have departments/agencies convened regularly enough (including through the council and steering committee) to promote meaningful collaboration in implementing the Veterans Employment Initiative?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

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11. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
The Veterans Employment Initiative has had a positive impact on veterans' employment in the federal government	○	○	○	○	○	○
The Veterans Employment Initiative has improved:						
Hiring of veterans overall	○	○	○	○	○	○
Hiring of veterans in key positions	○	○	○	○	○	○
Retention of veterans overall	○	○	○	○	○	○
Retention of veterans in key positions	○	○	○	○	○	○
The Veterans Employment Initiative has improved:						
Understanding of veterans' preference	○	○	○	○	○	○
Understanding of other veterans hiring authorities	○	○	○	○	○	○
Use of Veterans' Preference by hiring managers	○	○	○	○	○	○
Use of other veterans hiring authorities by hiring managers	○	○	○	○	○	○

12. Are there other outcomes that should be considered when assessing the impact of the Veterans Employment Initiative?
○ Yes (please specify)
○ No

13. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Veterans advance the mission of my department/agency	○	○	○	○	○
Veterans improve diversity in my department/agency					

14. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW
Veterans' Preference advances the mission of my department/agency	○	○	○	○	○	○
Veterans' Preference contributes to hiring high quality employees in my department/agency						
Veterans' Preference improves diversity in my department/agency	○	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals with hiring responsibilities in my department/agency understand Veterans' Preference rules						
Individuals with hiring responsibilities in my department/agency appropriately implement Veterans' Preference	○	○	○	○	○	○
In general, I support Veterans' Preference						
I believe Veterans' Preference contributes to a fair hiring system	○	○	○	○	○	○
In general, employees in my department/agency support Veterans' Preference						
Employees in my department/agency believe Veterans' Preference contributes to a fair hiring system	○	○	○	○	○	○

15. Compared to non-veteran employees, veteran employees in my department/agency turn over:
- ○ More often
- ○ About the same
- ○ Less often
- ○ Don't know

16. Compared to non-veteran employees, veteran employees in my department/agency turn over:
- ○ More often
- ○ About the same
- ○ Less often
- ○ Don't know

17. I work for a
- ○ Very Large Department/Agency (75,000)
- ○ Large Department/Agency (10,000 – 74,999)
- ○ Medium Department/Agency (1,000 – 9,999)
- ○ Small Department/Agency (100 – 999)
- ○ Very Small Department/Agency (<100)
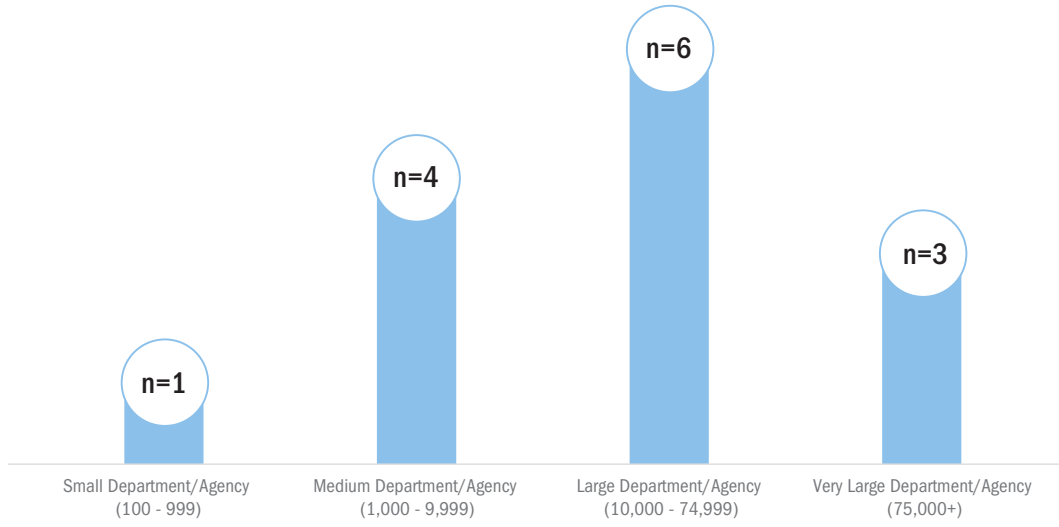
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SURVEY 1 – FEDERAL CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER SURVEY

n=1	n=4	n=6	n=3
Small Department/Agency (100 - 999)	Medium Department/Agency (1,000 - 9,999)	Large Department/Agency (10,000 - 74,999)	Very Large Department/Agency (75,000+)

FEDERAL CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER SURVEY:
Implementation of the Veterans Employment Initiative

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1. Consent Form - Executive Order 13518/ Federal Hiring Managers and Veteran Employees

Thank you for participating in the Executive Order 13518/Veterans Employment Initiative Survey being conducted by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) in partnership with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The purpose of this survey is to gather information on your perspectives regarding veterans' employment in the federal government and the Veterans Employment Initiative. Because this data has not been previously captured, the survey will provide insight into how federal leaders can best promote veterans' employment in the federal civil service.

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Clicking on the "Agree" option below indicates that:

• You have read the above information
• You voluntarily agree to participate
• You are at least 18 years of age

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- ○ Agree
- ○ Disagree

If respondent answers "Disagree," they exit the survey. Otherwise they continue.

2. Are you currently a federal employee?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No, but I previously worked for the federal government
- ○ I have never been a federal employee

If respondent answers "I have never been a federal employee," they exit the survey. Otherwise, they continue.
If respondent answers "Yes," they are asked the following question (question 4 and 5):

3. How long have you been with the federal government (excluding military service)?

- ○ Less than a year
- ○ 1-3 years
- ○ 4 to 5 years
- ○ 6 to 10 years
- ○ 11 to 14 years
- ○ 15 to 20 years
- ○ More than 20 years

4. What department/agency do you currently work for?

- ○ Department of Agriculture
- ○ Department of Commerce
- ○ Department of Defense
- ○ Department of Education
- ○ Department of Energy
- ○ Department of Health and Human Services
- ○ Department of Homeland Security
- ○ Department of Housing and Urban Development
- ○ Department of the Interior
- ○ Department of Justice
- ○ Department of Labor
- ○ Department of State
- ○ Department of Transportation
- ○ Department of the Treasury
- ○ Department of Veterans Affairs
- ○ Environmental Protection Agency
- ○ National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- ○ Agency for International Development
- ○ General Services Administration
- ○ National Science Foundation
- ○ Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- ○ Office of Personnel Management
- ○ Small Business Administration
- ○ Social Security Administration
- ○ Other (Please Specify)

If respondent answers "No, but I previously worked for the federal government," they are asked the following question (questions 6 and 7):

5. If you previously worked for the federal government, when did you leave your last position?

- ○ Before 2010
- ○ 2010
- ○ 2011
- ○ 2012
- ○ 2013
- ○ 2014
- ○ 2015
- ○ 2016

If respondent answers "Before 2010" they exit the survey. Otherwise, they continue.

If respondent answers other than "Before 2010," they are asked the following question:

6. What was the last department/agency you worked for?

- ○ Department of Agriculture
- ○ Department of Commerce
- ○ Department of Defense
- ○ Department of Education
- ○ Department of Energy
- ○ Department of Health and Human Services
- ○ Department of Homeland Security
- ○ Department of Housing and Urban Development
- ○ Department of the Interior
- ○ Department of Justice
- ○ Department of Labor
- ○ Department of State
- ○ Department of Transportation
- ○ Department of the Treasury
- ○ Department of Veterans Affairs
- ○ Environmental Protection Agency
- ○ National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- ○ Agency for International Development
- ○ General Services Administration
- ○ National Science Foundation
- ○ Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- ○ Office of Personnel Management
- ○ Small Business Administration
- ○ Social Security Administration
- ○ Other (Please Specify)

If respondent is either a current federal employee OR left federal employment in 2010 or after, they are asked the following two questions:

7. Do you currently or have you ever had hiring responsibilities as a federal employee?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

8. Have you ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces/Uniformed Services (Active, Guard, or Reserve)? Active duty includes serving in the U.S. Armed Forces as well as activation from the Reserves or National Guard?

- ○ Yes, currently serving
- ○ Yes, in the past, but now
- ○ No, never on duty except for initial/basic training
- ○ No, never served in the armed forces
- ○ Prefer not to answer

If respondent answers "Yes"—they currently have or previously had hiring responsibilities—AND "No, never on duty except for initial/basic training, OR "No, never served in the armed forces," OR "Prefer not to answer" they enter the hiring manager track of the survey

If respondent is a current federal employee AND answers "No"—they do not currently nor ever had hiring responsibilities—AND answers "No, never on duty except for initial/basic training" OR "No, never served in the armed forces," OR "Prefer not to answer," they answer the following questions and then exit the survey.

9. How many years of active duty service have you completed?
- ○ Less than 1 year
- ○ 1 – 3 years
- ○ 4 – 8 years
- ○ 9 – 20 years
- ○ More than 20 years

10. When did you serve? Select all that apply.
- ○ September 2001 or later
- ○ August 1990 to August 2001 (including Persian Gulf War)
- ○ May 1975 to July 1990
- ○ Vietnam era (August 1964 to April 1975)
- ○ February 1955 to July 1964
- ○ Korean War (July 1950 to January 1955)
- ○ January 1947 to June 1950
- ○ World War II (December 1941 to December 1946)
- ○ November 1941 or earlier
- ○ Prefer not to answer

11. What is/was your highest pay grade?
- ○ Junior Enlisted (E1-E4)
- ○ Senior Enlisted (E5-E9)
- ○ Warrant Officer (W1-W5)
- ○ Company/Junior Grade Officer (O1-O3)
- ○ Field/Mid Grade Officer (O4-O6)
- ○ General Flag Officer (O7-O10)

12. Do you have a service-connected disability?
- ○ Yes, less than 10%
- ○ Yes, at least 10% but less than 30%
- ○ Yes, 30% or more
- ○ I do not have a service-connected disability

13. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
My department/agency is military friendly (or The last department/agency I worked for was military friendly)	○	○	○	○	○
Veterans' Preference advances the mission of my department/agency (or Veterans' Preference advanced the mission of the last department/agency I worked for)	○	○	○	○	○
Veterans' Preference improves the diversity of my department/agency (or Veterans' Preference improved the diversity of the last department department/agency I worked for)	○	○	○	○	○
In general, I support Veterans' Preference					
Veterans' Preference contributes to a fair hiring system	○	○	○	○	○
In general, employees in my department/agency support Veterans' Preference					
Employees in my department/agency believe Veterans' Preference contributes to a fair hiring system	○	○	○	○	○

HIRING MANAGER QUESTIONS – GENERAL

14. In your experience, what proportion of your applicants are/were veterans?
- ○ Less than 25%
- ○ 25% - 50%
- ○ 50% - 75%
- ○ 75% or more

15. In your experience, what proportion of your coworkers are/were veterans?
- ○ Less than 25%
- ○ 25% - 50%
- ○ 50% - 75%
- ○ 75% or more

16. Please rate your level of understanding of Veterans' Preference
- ○ Understand completely
- ○ Moderately understand
- ○ Somewhat understand
- ○ Slightly understand
- ○ Do not understand at all

17. Please rate your level of difficulty understanding Veterans' Preference.
- ○ Very difficult to understand
- ○ Moderately difficult to understand
- ○ Somewhat difficult to understand
- ○ Slightly difficult to understand
- ○ Not at all difficult to understand

18. Please rate your level of difficulty implementing Veterans' Preference.
- ○ Very difficult to implement
- ○ Moderately difficult to implement
- ○ Somewhat difficult to implement
- ○ Slightly difficult to implement
- ○ Not at all difficult to implement

19. Why is/was Veterans' Preference Difficult to Implement? Check all that apply.
- ○ Lack of knowledge of Veterans' Preference
- ○ Lack of experience with Veterans' Preference
- ○ Administrative burden
- ○ Other (Please specify)

20. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Veterans' Preference advances the mission of my department/agency	○	○	○	○	○
Veterans' Preference contributes to hiring high quality employees in my department/agency	○	○	○	○	○
Veterans' Preference improves diversity in my department/agency	○	○	○	○	○
I have had a positive experience with Veterans' Preference in terms of: My own employment / My ability to hire the best applicant	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○
In general, employees in my department/agency support Veterans' Preference	○	○	○	○	○
Veterans' Preference contributes to a fair hiring system	○	○	○	○	○

If respondent left federal employment in 2010 or after, they are asked the following questions:

20a. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Veterans' Preference advanced the mission of the last department/agency I worked for	○	○	○	○	○
Veterans' Preference contributed to hiring high quality employees in the last department/agency I worked for	○	○	○	○	○
Veterans' Preference improved diversity in the last department/agency I worked	○	○	○	○	○
I have had a positive experience with Veterans' Preference in terms of: My own employment My ability to hire the best applicant	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	○ ○
In general, employees in my department/ agency support Veterans' Preference	○	○	○	○	○
Veterans' Preference contributes to a fair hiring system	○	○	○	○	○

HIRING MANAGER QUESTIONS – VEI-SPECIFIC

21. Please rate your level of understanding of the Veterans Employment Initiative
- ○ Do not understand at all
- ○ Slightly understand
- ○ Somewhat understand
- ○ Moderately understand
- ○ Understand completely

22. Were/Are you aware of the designated veteran hiring official and/or the Veteran Employment Program Office at your department/agency?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Prefer not to answer

If respondent answers "No," they move on to the question about HR training.
If respondent answers "Yes," they are asked the following questions and then move on to the question about HR training:

23. How often do/did you communicate with the designated hiring official and/or Veteran Employment Program Office at your department/agency?
- ○ Never
- ○ At least once annually
- ○ At least once every 6 months
- ○ At least once a month
- ○ At least once a week
- ○ Daily

24. **How difficult is/was it to interact with the designated hiring official and/or Veteran Employment Program Office at your department/agency?**
- ○ Not at all difficult
- ○ Slightly difficult
- ○ Neither easy nor difficult
- ○ Somewhat difficult
- ○ Moderately difficult
- ○ Very difficult

25. **How helpful has/was the designated hiring official and/or Veteran Employment Program Office at yourdepartment/agency been?**
- ○ Very helpful
- ○ Moderately helpful
- ○ Somewhat helpful
- ○ Slightly helpful
- ○ Not at all helpful

26. **Have you ever attended a Human Resources (HR) training on veterans' employment issues?/ Did you ever attended a Human Resources (HR) training on veterans' employment issues at the last department/agency you worked for?**
- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Prefer not to answer

If respondent answers "No," skip to question
If respondent answers "Yes," they are asked the following questions and then move on to the question about recruiting:

27. **How often do you attend HR training on veterans' employment issues? How often did you attend HR training on veterans' employment issues at the last department/agency you worked for?**
- ○ Annually
- ○ Semi-annually
- ○ Only once
- ○ More than once, but not on regularly scheduled basis

28. **How difficult is it to access HR training on veterans' employment issues? How difficult was it to access HR training on veterans' employment issues at the last department/agency you worked for?**
- ○ Not at all difficult
- ○ Slightly difficult
- ○ Somewhat difficult
- ○ Moderately difficult
- ○ Very difficult

29. **How helpful is HR training on veterans' employment issues? How helpful was HR training on veterans' employment issues at the last department/agency you worked for?**
- ○ Very helpful
- ○ Moderately helpful
- ○ Somewhat helpful
- ○ Slightly helpful
- ○ Not at all helpful

30. To your knowledge, does/did your department/agency actively recruit veterans?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ I don't know

FEDERAL VETERAN EMPLOYEES QUESTIONS – GENERAL
If respondent is a current federal employee, they answer the following questions:

31. What resources did you use to find your current job?
- ○ Internet
- ○ Job banks/Career centers
- ○ Referral services
- ○ Veterans services
- ○ Networking through military connections
- ○ Networking through family friends
- ○ Online job boards and career tools (Military.com, LinkedIn, Monster.com, etc.)
- ○ Career fairs
- ○ Directly contacting employers/HR
- ○ Other (please specify)
- ○ Prefer not to answer
- ○ None

32. Is this your first job in the federal government?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

33. Did Veterans' Preference help you get this job?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

34. Did Veterans' Preference help you get your first job in the federal government?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

35. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
My department/agency is military friendly	○	○	○	○	○
As a veteran, my contributions are valued	○	○	○	○	○
I feel my work advances my department/agency mission	○	○	○	○	○
As a veteran, my colleagues understand the perspectives I bring to the workplace	○	○	○	○	○
As a veteran, my supervisor understands the perspectives I bring to the workplace	○	○	○	○	○

36. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
My first job was a good match for me in terms of:					
My skills	○	○	○	○	○
My desired responsibilities	○	○	○	○	○
My desired work environment	○	○	○	○	○
My desired work-life balance	○	○	○	○	○

37. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
My current job was a good match for me in terms of:					
My skills	○	○	○	○	○
My desired responsibilities	○	○	○	○	○
My desired work environment	○	○	○	○	○
My desired work-life balance	○	○	○	○	○

38. How content are you in your current job?
- ◯ Not at all content
- ◯ Slightly content
- ◯ Somewhat content
- ◯ Moderately content
- ◯ Very content

39. How likely are you to change jobs in the next 6-12 months?
- ◯ Not at all likely
- ◯ Slightly likely
- ◯ Somewhat likely
- ◯ Moderately likely
- ◯ Very likely

40. I am seeking a new job in (choose the response based on where you would most prefer to work in your next job)
- ◯ My current federal department/agency
- ◯ Another federal department/agency
- ◯ State or local government
- ◯ The private sector

41. I am seeking a new job because (check all that apply)
- ◯ Hostile work environment
- ◯ Advancement opportunities
- ◯ Poor job fit
- ◯ Desire for change
- ◯ Compensation
- ◯ Personal reasons (e.g., family considerations, health considerations, etc.)

FEDERAL VETERAN EMPLOYEES QUESTIONS – VEI-SPECIFIC

42. Please rate your level of understanding of the Veterans Employment Initiative
- ◯ Do not understand at all
- ◯ Slightly understand
- ◯ Somewhat understand
- ◯ Moderately understand
- ◯ Understand completely

43. Do you know the difference between the Veterans Employment Initiative and Veterans' Preference?
- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ I don't know

If respondent is a current federal employee, they are asked the following questions:

44. Have you ever interacted with the designated veteran employment official and/or Veteran Employment Program Office at your department/agency?
- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

If respondent answers "No," they move on to the question about VEI impact on employment situation
If respondent answers "Yes," they are asked the following questions and then they move on to the question about VEI impact on employment situation

45. How often do you interact with the designated veteran employment official and/or Veteran Employment Program Office at department/agency?

- ○ Daily
- ○ At least once a week
- ○ At least once a month
- ○ At least once every six months
- ○ At least once annually

46. How difficult is it to access the designated veteran employment official and/or Veteran Employment Program Office at your department/agency?

- ○ Very difficult
- ○ Moderately difficult
- ○ Somewhat difficult
- ○ Slightly difficult
- ○ Not at all difficult

47. How helpful is the designated hiring official and/or Veteran Employment Program Office at your department/agency?

- ○ Not at all helpful
- ○ Slightly helpful
- ○ Somewhat helpful
- ○ Moderately helpful
- ○ Very helpful

48. What impact has the Veterans Employment Initiative had on your employment situation?

- ○ Not all positive
- ○ Slightly positive
- ○ Somewhat positive
- ○ Moderately positive
- ○ Very positive
- ○ Don't know

After answering this question, current federal employee respondent moves on to "CONLUDING QUESTIONS"
If respondent left federal employment in 2010 or later, they are asked the following questions:

49. Did you ever interact with the designated veteran employment official and/or Veteran Employment Program Office at the last department/agency you worked for?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If respondent answers "No," they move on to the question about VEI impact on employment situation
If respondent answers "Yes," they are asked the following questions and then they move on to the question about VEI impact on employment situation

50. How often did you interact with the designated hiring official and/or Veteran Employment Program Office at the last department/agency you worked for?

- ○ Daily
- ○ At least once a week
- ○ At least once a month
- ○ At least once every six months
- ○ At least once annually

51. How difficult was it to access the designated hiring official and/or Veteran Employment Program Office at the last department/agency you worked for?

○ Very difficult
○ Moderately difficult
○ Somewhat difficult
○ Slightly difficult
○ Not at all difficult

53. How helpful was the designated hiring official and/or Veteran Employment Program Office at the last2department/agency you worked for?

○ Not at all helpful
○ Slightly helpful
○ Somewhat helpful
○ Moderately helpful
○ Very helpful

53. What impact did the Veterans Employment Initiative have on your employment situation?

○ Not all positive
○ Slightly positive
○ Somewhat positive
○ Moderately positive
○ Very positive
○ Don't know

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS – ASKED OF ALL RECIPIENTS FILTERED INTO THE HIRING MANAGER OR FEDERAL VETERAN EMPLOYEE TRACKS

54. Are you:

○ Male
○ Female
○ Prefer not to answer

55. Do you consider yourself to be one of the following? (Mark as many that apply).

○ Heterosexual or Straight
○ Gay or Lesbian
○ Bisexual
○ Transgender
○ Prefer not to answer

56. What is your age range?

○ Under 20
○ 21-24
○ 25-30
○ 31-34
○ 35-40
○ 41-44
○ 45-50
○ 51-64
○ 65 and older

57. Please select the racial category or categories with which you most closely identify (select the choice that best describes you).

- ○ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ○ Asian
- ○ Black or African American
- ○ Hispanic/Latino
- ○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ○ White
- ○ Other, please specify: _____
- ○ Prefer not to answer

58. What is your pay category/grade?

- ○ Federal Wage System (for example, WB, WD, WG, WL, WM, WS, WY)
- ○ GS 1-6
- ○ GS 7-12
- ○ GS 13-15
- ○ Senior Executive Service
- ○ Senior Level (SL) or Scientific Profession
- ○ Other, please specify: _____

59. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Veterans advance the mission of my department/agency (or Veterans advanced the mission of the last department/agency I worked for)	○	○	○	○	○
Veterans Veterans improve diversity in my department/agency (or Veterans Veterans improved diversity in the last department/agency I worked for)	○	○	○	○	○

60. Compared to non-veteran employees, veteran employees in my last department/agency turned over:

- ○ More often
- ○ About the same
- ○ Less often

61. Compared to veteran employees 40 and older, veteran employees under 40 in my last department/agency turned over:

- ○ More often
- ○ About the same
- ○ Less often

62. Please share any additional comments about the U.S. government's veterans' employment initiative, hiring preferences, retention, or any other aspect not addressed in this survey. If you prefer not to answer, please skip this question.

SURVEY 2 –VETERAN EMPLOYMENT IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SURVEY DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES BY AGENCY

AGENCY	Number of Respondents	% of Sample
Total Executive Branch Agencies	8561	100.00%
Agriculture	100	1.17%
Commerce	17	0.20%
Defense	11	0.13%
Education	13	0.15%
Energy	2	0.02%
HHS	57	0.67%
Homeland Security	3	0.04%
HUD	34	0.40%
Interior	65	0.76%
Justice	5	0.06%
Labor	838	9.79%
State	116	1.35%
Transportation	6	0.07%
Treasury	2671	31.20%
Veterans Affairs	8	0.09%
EPA	0	0.00%
NASA	0	0.00%
AID	37	0.43%
GSA	4	0.05%
NSF	4	0.05%
NRC	6	0.07%
OPM	28	0.33%
SBA	26	0.30%
SSA	4449	51.97%
Other Agencies	61	0.71%

AGENCY	Respondents as % of Total Agency Workforce
Agriculture	0.10%
Commerce	0.04%
Defense	0.00%
Education	0.30%
Energy	0.02%
HHS	0.07%
Homeland Security	0.00%
HUD	0.43%
Interior	0.09%
Justice	0.00%
Labor	5.32%
State	0.88%
Transportation	0.01%
Treasury	2.90%
Veterans Affairs	0.00%
EPA	0.00%
NASA	0.00%
AID	2.14%
GSA	0.03%
NSF	0.27%
NRC	0.17%
OPM	0.52%
SBA	0.68%
SSA	6.91%
Other Agencies	0.14%

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AGENCY ONBOARD, HIRING, AND RETENTION RATE TRENDS

Onboard and Hiring Trends

TABLE 1. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	10.0%	10.0%	10.4%	11.2%	11.7%	11.9%	12.4%
	n	10,600	10,852	10,983	11,365	11,366	11,450	12,013
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	1.9%	2.2%	2.5%	3.4%	3.8%	4.0%	4.6%
	n	2,041	2,341	2,582	3,456	3,662	3,877	4,415
Veteran New Hires	%	5.0%	6.0%	7.6%	8.0%	10.2%	10.7%	12.2%
	n	1,147	1,532	1,569	1,460	1,605	1,847	2,435
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	1.1%	1.7%	2.0%	2.6%	3.2%	3.3%	4.7%
	n	264	432	420	473	506	560	935

TABLE 2. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	11.1%	11.1%	10.8%	11.6%	11.7%	11.9%	12.0%
	n	5,486	5,480	5,138	5,250	5,435	5,384	5,684
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	1.9%	2.1%	2.0%	2.9%	3.2%	3.5%	3.7%
	n	949	1,016	959	1,303	1,466	1,589	1,079
Veteran New Hires	%	12.2%	10.2%	12.5%	11.1%	13.5%	13.2%	14.4%
	n	1,328	890	1,003	563	901	679	1,765
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	2.4%	2.0%	2.5%	3.7%	4.8%	4.6%	5.0%
	n	261	177	197	188	324	234	372

TABLE 3. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	41.2%	41.9%	43.7%	45.8%	46.5%	46.9%	47.3%
	n	277,998	299,815	316,975	325,180	317,251	313,881	320,407
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	10.9%	11.9%	12.9%	15.5%	16.9%	17.7%	18.7%
	n	73,925	84,915	93,388	110,431	115,300	118,578	126,483
Veteran New Hires	%	38.9%	41.6%	47.1%	45.9%	53.5%	49.8%	48.2%
	n	39,358	42,361	37,225	27,524	21,964	24,274	34,136
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	11.3%	13.1%	14.6%	14.9%	17.9%	17.3%	17.9%
	n	11,372	13,347	11,539	8,929	7,029	8,448	12,653

TABLE 4. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	8.0%	8.0%	8.4%	9.7%	10.4%	10.6%	10.7%
	n	336	363	387	422	440	444	455
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	1.9%	2.1%	2.3%	2.9%	3.4%	3.6%	4.1%
	n	82	97	108	128	146	153	173
Veteran New Hires	%	6.3%	6.5%	9.7%	10.5%	23.5%	16.6%	11.0%
	n	25	47	45	31	57	51	42
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	2.5%	2.1%	3.0%	4.4%	9.5%	8.4%	4.7%
	n	10	15	14	13	23	26	18

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TABLE 5. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	19.5%	19.5%	19.6%	21.3%	22.1%	22.9%	23.8%
	n	3,081	3,237	3,215	3,378	3,414	3,426	3,600
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	4.3%	4.5%	4.8%	5.9%	6.6%	7.2%	7.9%
	n	681	743	780	931	1,025	1,079	1,193
Veteran New Hires	%	18.4%	17.4%	20.0%	18.7%	37.3%	35.7%	35.4%
	n	341	266	225	185	280	268	396
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	4.6%	4.3%	6.4%	5.9%	14.6%	12.9%	14.0%
	n	85	66	72	58	110	97	157

TABLE 6. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	6.3%	6.2%	6.2%	6.6%	6.9%	7.2%	7.3%
	n	4,973	5,176	5,302	5,698	6,003	6,054	6,253
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	1.5%	1.6%	1.7%	2.3%	2.5%	2.7%	2.9%
	n	1,162	1,317	1,467	1,987	2,193	2,310	2,448
Veteran New Hires	%	5.2%	5.4%	5.6%	7.3%	9.8%	9.2%	9.2%
	n	528	603	523	597	666	615	743
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	1.5%	1.8%	1.8%	2.7%	4.0%	3.8%	4.1%
	n	149	199	171	223	268	251	335

TABLE 7. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	24.7%	24.7%	24.9%	27.4%	27.7%	27.9%	27.9%
	n	45,933	46,671	49,289	54,225	53,692	52,732	52,226
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	4.1%	4.3%	4.7%	6.4%	7.0%	7.7%	8.1%
	n	7,584	8,134	9,344	12,748	13,572	14,504	15,095
Veteran New Hires	%	22.6%	22.9%	20.4%	24.9%	24.6%	27.6%	27.4%
	n	4,964	3,446	4,071	3,565	2,914	2,646	3,557
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	4.0%	5.1%	5.2%	8.0%	8.0%	9.6%	10.1%
	n	879	770	1,045	1,151	951	916	1,308

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TABLE 8. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	13.3%	12.8%	13.1%	14.3%	14.2%	14.7%	15.2%
	n	1,271	1,287	1,279	1,323	1,240	1,239	1,245
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	4.2%	4.3%	4.6%	5.8%	6.0%	6.8%	7.3%
	n	398	429	445	535	523	572	596
Veteran New Hires	%	7.2%	7.1%	13.0%	12.9%	18.3%	25.7%	24.3%
	n	65	86	104	47	32	126	88
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	3.4%	3.1%	5.4%	7.1%	8.0%	16.5%	15.5%
	n	31	38	43	26	14	81	56

TABLE 9. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	14.9%	14.6%	14.9%	15.9%	16.3%	16.5%	16.8%
	n	11,446	11,554	11,470	12,218	11,701	11,572	11,751
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	3.3%	3.5%	3.8%	5.0%	5.3%	5.8%	6.3%
	n	2,503	2,741	2,922	3,851	3,831	4,055	4,380
Veteran New Hires	%	11.6%	11.7%	13.2%	14.7%	18.0%	17.5%	16.9%
	n	2,298	2,419	2,324	2,577	2,152	2,456	2,708
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	3.1%	3.5%	3.9%	5.2%	6.5%	6.9%	6.8%
	n	612	729	691	901	781	963	1,090

TABLE 10. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	18.3%	18.8%	19.3%	23.8%	24.4%	28.2%	25.1%
	n	20,602	21,944	22,494	27,598	28,004	31,892	28,816
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	2.7%	2.9%	3.3%	4.3%	5.0%	5.7%	6.1%
	n	3,006	3,429	3,825	5,043	5,716	6,435	7,044
Veteran New Hires	%	18.4%	21.8%	23.4%	27.4%	35.5%	43.5%	28.4%
	n	1,740	2,209	1,319	1,729	1,732	2,768	2,294
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	3.8%	4.9%	5.6%	7.9%	11.1%	9.5%	9.5%
	n	359	496	316	500	543	606	769

TABLE 11. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	17.5%	17.8%	18.1%	19.8%	20.6%	20.8%	21.3%
	n	2,801	2,961	2,956	3,319	3,343	3,316	3,388
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	5.9%	6.3%	6.8%	8.7%	9.7%	10.1%	10.9%
	n	935	1,048	1,106	1,454	1,581	1,616	1,730
Veteran New Hires	%	18.7	22.8%	27.3%	30.4%	39.1%	35.0%	36.5%
	n	373	452	330	499	303	316	417
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	7.9%	10.3%	11.8%	15.5%	22.5%	18.8%	20.4%
	n	157	205	142	255	174	170	233

TABLE 12. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	16.3%	16.7%	17.9%	18.8%	19.6%	19.8%	20.6%
	n	1,875	1,987	2,253	2,414	2,532	2,516	2,622
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	3.6%	4.2%	4.8%	6.0%	6.7%	7.1%	7.8%
	n	418	494	603	766	862	901	988
Veteran New Hires	%	11.1%	13.3%	16.5%	16.6%	27.4%	27.5%	33.3%
	n	219	262	378	327	338	250	362
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	2.4%	4.2%	4.7%	5.1%	8.3%	9.5%	12.8%
	n	48	83	108	101	103	86	139

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TABLE 13. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	29.0%	28.8%	29.0%	35.9%	35.8%	36.4%	36.7%
	n	16,717	16,716	16,730	20,511	19,774	19,914	20,094
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	5.2%	5.6%	6.1%	8.0%	8.4%	9.1%	9.8%
	n	3,021	3,260	3,505	4,549	4,651	5,006	5,391
Veteran New Hires	%	25.4%	30.1%	34.7%	33.8%	38.3%	46.5%	43.5%
	n	1,301	1,258	1,097	962	712	1,527	1,633
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	7.1%	9.3%	11.7%	12.2%	16.5%	18.7%	16.7%
	n	366	387	370	347	306	613	626

TABLE 14. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	9.7%	9.8%	7.0%	6.7%	6.6%	6.5%	11.2%
	n	10,550	10,733	10,278	11,874	11,108	10,523	10,180
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	2.4%	2.6%	2.7%	3.6%	3.7%	3.9%	4.0%
	n	2,576	2,896	2,911	3,799	3,684	3,620	3,650
Veteran New Hires	%	9.5%	11.4%	8.6%	13.6%	13.5%	13.0%	13.3%
	n	1,709	1,655	955	1,040	1,140	1,012	785
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	3.2%	4.6%	3.3%	6.7%	6.6%	6.5%	7.1%
	n	580	664	367	514	559	504	420

TABLE 15. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	26.6%	27.0%	27.8%	32.2%	32.4%	32.9%	32.9%
	n	79,068	83,241	87,841	104,539	109,525	114,740	120,187
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	8.1%	8.6%	9.2%	13.1%	14.1%	15.1%	15.8%
	n	24,047	26,602	29,164	42,658	47,453	52,806	57,716
Veteran New Hires	%	27.5%	29.5%	31.7%	34.0%	34.1%	37.7%	34.3%
	n	12,353	11,861	11,975	13,353	14,877	17,009	17,286
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	9.7%	11.0%	11.7%	18.0%	19.1%	22.2%	20.9%
	n	4,353	4,418	4,407	7,086	8,321	9,996	10,498

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TABLE 16. U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	6.5%	6.4%	7.2%	8.9%	9.3%	14.6%	14.7%
	n	184	215	279	354	357	248	251
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	1.5%	2.0%	2.1%	2.8%	3.0%	6.0%	6.6%
	n	42	66	82	112	116	102	112
Veteran New Hires	%	5.0%	5.6%	8.6%	15.7%	16.2%	15.5%	18.0%
	n	27	42	68	74	42	23	29
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	0.6%	2.1%	2.0%	4.9%	6.9%	4.7%	9.9%
	n	3	16	16	23	18	7	16

TABLE 17. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	7.4%	7.5%	7.5%	8.2%	8.1%	8.0%	8.3%
	n	1,369	1,408	1,404	1,480	1,365	1,267	1,281
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	1.7%	1.8%	1.9%	2.4%	2.4%	2.6%	3.0%
	n	315	342	349	425	404	411	456
Veteran New Hires	%	6.8%	7.3%	9.1%	10.9%	14.6%	11.2%	15.6%
	n	104	115	120	65	37	35	133
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	2.3%	2.3%	2.4%	5.2%	6.3%	5.8%	8.2%
	n	35	37	32	31	16	18	70

TABLE 18. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	19.8%	19.6%	20.0%	21.7%	21.6%	21.7%	21.4%
	n	2,469	2,530	2,549	2,685	2,556	2,494	2,389
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	4.7%	5.1%	5.7%	6.7%	7.1%	7.7%	8.2%
	n	590	655	720	832	844	883	915
Veteran New Hires	%	19.9%	18.0%	25.2%	23.7%	33.9%	31.9%	25.4%
	n	243	195	145	149	84	111	157
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	6.5%	6.1%	10.8%	8.9%	21.0%	14.7%	12.0%
	n	79	66	62	56	52	51	74

TABLE 19. NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	10.2%	10.0%	10.0%	11.5%	11.8%	11.8%	12.0%
	n	1,898	1,874	1,858	2,084	2,124	2,091	2,065
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	1.9%	2.0%	2.1%	2.7%	3.0%	3.2%	3.6%
	n	355	378	395	483	535	574	624
Veteran New Hires	%	7.5%	9.1%	11.9%	11.3%	25.9%	23.2%	28.2%
	n	57	78	69	65	176	103	135
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	2.6%	3.2%	5.0%	3.7%	10.9%	9.9%	15.4%
	n	20	27	29	21	74	44	74

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TABLE 20. NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	5.6%	5.7%	5.8%	7.6%	8.2%	8.6%	9.3%
	n	83	85	85	112	121	123	135
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	1.6%	1.4%	1.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.5%	3.7%
	n	24	21	24	40	43	50	54
Veteran New Hires	%	2.2%	6.8%	4.2%	7.3%	7.9%	8.1%	10.2%
	n	6	17	9	17	19	19	25
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	1.5%	1.2%	2.4%	4.3%	3.8%	4.3%	3.7%
	n	4	3	5	10	9	10	9

TABLE 21. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	21.4%	22.0%	22.6%	23.1%	23.5%	23.6%	23.3%
	n	1,250	1,374	1,420	1,340	1,313	1,173	1,188
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	6.5%	7.3%	8.1%	9.0%	9.6%	10.1%	10.4%
	n	378	458	508	521	537	502	531
Veteran New Hires	%	27.3%	26.8%	39.6%	32.2%	49.1%	31.1%	24.9%
	n	171	229	262	127	108	60	109
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	11.5%	13.2%	17.2%	15.5%	23.2%	14.5%	12.6%
	n	72	113	114	61	51	28	55

TABLE 22. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	17.3%	18.8%	18.8%	21.0%	21.0%	17.3%	21.5%
	n	717	793	772	821	808	825	818
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	2.1%	2.3%	2.4%	3.7%	4.1%	4.4%	4.8%
	n	86	95	99	143	156	172	182
Veteran New Hires	%	19.6%	20.8%	20.8%	24.0%	27.3%	28.0%	26.7%
	n	73	76	40	24	62	81	63
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	2.7%	3.8%	2.1%	6.0%	9.7%	8.0%	10.2%
	n	10	14	4	6	22	23	24

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TABLE 23. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	9.8%	10.1%	10.1%	11.5%	11.8%	14.1%	15.6%
	n	6,620	7,052	6,757	7,494	7,386	9,127	10,257
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	3.0%	3.4%	3.5%	4.4%	4.7%	6.2%	7.2%
	n	2,026	2,362	2,354	2,878	2,925	4,010	4,735
Veteran New Hires	%	12.3%	13.5%	28.0%	34.6%	38.4%	40.4%	38.7%
	n	1,048	1,167	402	734	510	2,863	2,122
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	5.6%	6.4%	12.3%	15.9%	19.5%	21.5%	20.1%
	n	475	552	177	337	259	1,525	1,100

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TABLE 24. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION		FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Veteran Onboard	%	13.5%	13.3%	14.5%	15.4%	16.7%	16.6%	16.8%
	n	529	533	675	758	818	756	694
Disabled Veteran Onboard	%	2.7%	2.8%	3.6%	4.7%	5.7%	6.1%	6.9%
	n	107	111	167	230	282	279	286
Veteran New Hires	%	8.6%	13.5%	15.7%	15.6%	12.6%	28.5%	28.1%
	n	77	68	186	159	190	79	112
Disabled Veteran New Hires	%	1.5%	4.8%	4.6%	5.8%	5.0%	18.1%	16.3%
	n	13	24	54	59	75	50	65

AGENCY ONBOARD, HIRING, AND RETENTION RATE TRENDS

Retention Trends

TABLE 1. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	83.3%	77.9%
Veteran Retention	%	74.8%	66.9%

TABLE 2. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	81.9%	79.6%
Veteran Retention	%	68.2%	69.9%

TABLE 3. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	75.6%	77.6%
Veteran Retention	%	76.5%	74.3%

TABLE 4. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	79.7%	89.5%
Veteran Retention	%	79.3%	79.7%

TABLE 5. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	84.6%	86.7%
Veteran Retention	%	81.5%	81.2%

TABLE 6. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	77.2%	77.5%
Veteran Retention	%	72.9%	68.3%

TABLE 7. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	86.0%	80.8%
Veteran Retention	%	80.6%	76.9%

TABLE 8. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	77.2%	77.5%
Veteran Retention	%	72.9%	68.3%

TABLE 9. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	79.7%	78.3%
Veteran Retention	%	74.0%	71.4%

TABLE 10. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	86.7%	81.9%
Veteran Retention	%	79.6%	76.7%

TABLE 11. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	83.1%	84.4%
Veteran Retention	%	75.2%	69.9%

TABLE 12. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	82.1%	85.2%
Veteran Retention	%	85.0%	75.4%

TABLE 13. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	87.0%	82.2%
Veteran Retention	%	83.3%	81.4%

TABLE 14. DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY

DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	89.9%	85.0%
Veteran Retention	%	73.2%	72.0%

TABLE 15. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	80.3%	80.0%
Veteran Retention	%	73.2%	71.6%

TABLE 16. U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	84.9%	85.3%
Veteran Retention	%	78.3%	71.1%

TABLE 17. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	84.2%	87.4%
Veteran Retention	%	76.0%	83.9%

TABLE 18. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	88.4%	78.8%
Veteran Retention	%	78.8%	74.8%

TABLE 19. NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	79.0%	70.3%
Veteran Retention	%	88.4%	73.2%

TABLE 20. NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	80.7%	80.4%
Veteran Retention	%	75.0%	68.4%

TABLE 21. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	83.6%	77.4%
Veteran Retention	%	73.7%	71.7%

TABLE 22. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	96.8%	87.0%
Veteran Retention	%	88.2%	88.0%

TABLE 23. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	87.3%	80.7%
Veteran Retention	%	74.4%	72.6%

TABLE 24. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION		FY 2014	FY 2015
Non-Veteran Retention	%	87.6%	83.4%
Veteran Retention	%	61.5%	67.2%

Empowering veterans to obtain employment has become the forefront of policy priorities in the last decade. Over the last few years there has been a distinct effort both in the public and private sector to boost veteran employment by linking military-acquired skills to employers' needs. This appendix gives a full review from some of the most prominent hiring programs in both the public and private sector, and presents some basic data on veteran employment related to these initiatives.

The federal government takes a multifaceted approach to addressing veteran employment through three basic mechanisms—federally funded assistance and training programs, skill- matching, and applying internal federal hiring practices to prioritize veteran hiring. The table below summarizes these programs.

PROGRAM NAME	DESCRIPTION
Feds Hire Vets	Managed by OPM, the Feds Hire Vets website is a comprehensive source of federal employment information for veterans, transitioning service members, and human resource professionals.
Forever GI Bill	The G.I. Bill, depending on individual eligibility criteria, provides up to 36 months of funding and benefits for costs and living expenses in-curred while enrolled in approved educational programs
Gold Card	The Veteran Gold Card, program launched by the Department of Labor, is a special program targeting post-9/11 veterans in helping them transition to civilian life. Service members can access six months of personalized case management through one of the 3,000 national career centers.
Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program	HVRP provides services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force and related service delivery systems that address the problems facing homeless veterans.
The Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program	Managed by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), JVSG provides grant funding to 54 state workforce agencies to hire dedicated staff to provide individualized career and training-related services through Disabled Veterans Outreach Programs (DVOPS) at one-stop career centers and other satellite programs throughout all 50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam.
Military One Source	Military One Source provides free transition resources for up to 180 days after separation or retirement from the military.
The Military Spouse Employment Partnership	The MSEP is a web-based recruitment tool aimed at developing career and educational opportunities for military spouses with Fortune 500 employers.
My Next Move	Through this online tool created by the Department of Labor, veterans enter in their skills and experience to be matched up with potential careers that fit with their credentials. The tool also contains data on these careers such as salaries, needed education, and training pro-grams.
The National Resource Directory	The National Resource Directory is a website that connects service members, veterans, their families, and caregivers to supportive pro-grams and services (including employment, education, and training resources).

PROGRAM NAME	DESCRIPTION
Small Business Administration	SBA's Office of Veterans Business Development provides extensive programming to assist veterans develop and manage their small businesses as well as obtain federal contracts. Prominent examples include Boots to Business, IVMF's Entrepreneurship Boot Camp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV) and Women Veterans Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (V-WISE), as well as their Veterans Business Outreach Centers (among others).
Transition GPS	Transition, Goals, Plans, Success (GPS) is a mandatory five-day pro-gram for separating and retiring service members. The program pro-vides professional career development services and assistance with obtaining civilian employment.
Veterans' Em-ployment and Training Service	VETS is a multifaceted DOL program that offers resources and exper-tise for veterans seeking employment and training opportunities. Veterans receive preference in receiving service through DOL training programs open to the general public.
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment	This VA program funds training for resources for veterans with ser-vice-connected disabilities who are seeking employment or educa-tion.
Veterans Upward Bound	VUB, administered by the Department of Education, provides grant funding for assistance for veterans with the enhancement of educa-tional skills through counseling, tutoring, and instruction. The pro-gram aims to develop academic and other requisite skills necessary for acceptance and success in program of postsecondary education.
Veterans Work-force Investment Program	Provides grants to public agencies, faith-based organizations, and nonprofits that provide training and employment resources to veter-ans.

G

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