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Leveraging Veteran Talent to Fill Critical State Employee Positions

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Project team

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Some Virginia veterans are unemployed, but small proportion is hired into state employee positions

- ~678K Virginia veterans
 - Unemployed – 3%; Employed – 59%; Not looking – 38%
- ~434K total applications for state employee positions (2023)
 - ~26K veteran applications
 - **Just 5% of veteran applicants hired**

Source: Department of Veterans Services (DVS) data.

Several critical Virginia state employee positions are difficult to fill

- VADOC = 1,500 corrections officer position vacancies
- VSP = 362 state police trooper vacancies
- VITA = 2 IT cloud-related vacancies
- Positions are difficult to fill for various reasons, including:
 - **skills needed (e.g., strong communication, cloud expertise)**
 - difficult work environment
 - salary

*VADOC = Virginia Department of Corrections; VSP = Virginia State Police; VITA = Virginia Information Technologies Agency

State could leverage veteran talent to help fill critical state employee positions

- Qualified veterans seeking employment in Virginia could help fill critical state vacancies
- Barriers make filling state vacancies challenging
 - Some barriers affect agency recruiters
 - Some barriers affect veteran applicants
- Team has **3 recommendations** to help address barriers

Virginia veteran hiring preference applied differently across state agencies

- Under Virginia law (§ 2.2-2903), state agencies are mandated to provide hiring preference to honorably discharged veterans, surviving spouses or children of veterans killed in line of duty, or members of the Virginia National Guard

Department of Veterans Services (DVS) offers a variety of programs to assist

- Virginia Values Veterans (V3)
 - Employer Training & Certification
 - Access to Talent
 - Networking & Recognition
- Virginia Veterans Network



Virginia Community College System also has veteran employment transition programs

- FastForward
- Credits2Careers
- Specialized Training Programs



Other states have similar state employee hiring challenges and veteran-focused hiring programs

- Reviewed veteran recruitment and retention efforts in North Carolina, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York
- All five states face similar hard-to-fill roles in healthcare, corrections, engineering, and IT
- Specialized veteran employment programs (such as NC4ME, SC Works, and state-specific hiring preferences are in place
- Pennsylvania accepts federal military experience and removal of degree requirements
- New Jersey has strong hiring preferences and fast-track programs designed to increase the veteran and disabled workforce
- New York focus on National Guard recruitment and retention

Private sector companies have innovative hiring programs to fill vacancies

- Private sector companies often work with state training programs like FastForward to fill critical positions
- Some private sector companies have programs designed specifically to hire veterans
 - Dominion – "Troops to Energy Jobs"

Barrier 1: Some veterans need additional training to meet state employee position requirements

- Veterans sometimes lack specific training/credentials needed to transition from military to state employee positions
- Commonwealth lacks a cohesive strategy that integrates veterans' assistance, training programs, and efforts on hard to fill state positions
- Existing training programs do not address difficult-to-fill state positions
- Opportunity to leverage existing programs and funds rather than create new program

VCCS should pilot FastForward programs to train veterans for difficult-to-fill state employee positions

- FastForward programs are short-term workforce training programs run by VCCS
 - Used by some state agencies (VDOT, VDH) to train for positions
- **Recommendation 1**: Use existing FastForward program to pilot courses to help veterans obtain skills needed for critical state employee positions (e.g., corrections officer)
 - Should be developed with relevant state agencies to ensure participants are prepared to fill positions

*VCCS = Virginia Community Colleges System

Barrier 2: Lack of data on difficult to fill state positions impedes program development

- VCCS lacks data on difficult-to-fill state employee positions that is needed to develop new FastForward curriculums
- DVS lacks data on difficult-to-fill state employee positions and in-demand skills that could be helpful for veteran counseling
- Compiling a difficult-to-fill positions report would help agencies, policy makers, and educational institutions know where to focus efforts

Recommendation 2: DHRM compile and share report on most difficult-to-fill state employee positions and details with DVS, VCCS, and other state agency partners.

Barrier 3: Veterans may be qualified for state positions, but agencies can struggle interpreting their resumes

- State agency recruiters trying to fill state employee vacancies have difficulty deciphering veteran resumes
 - Veteran applicants may be “screened out” before interviews because their resumes have unfamiliar terms or lack key terms from position requirements
- DVS has training for agency recruiters on reviewing veteran resumes as part of V3 program, but agency participation is limited

*DVS = Virginia Department of Veterans Services

Military career fields and terms are complex and can be difficult to understand

*Over 1,000 codes across all branches of service

Example: Human Resource Career Fields

Military Branch	Career Field Code, Specialty or Rating	Description
US Army	42A	Human Resources Specialist
USMC	0171	Manpower Information Systems Analyst
USMC	0121	Personnel Clerk
US Navy	PS	Personnel Specialist
USAF/Space Force	3FOX1	Personnel
US Coast Guard	YN	Yeoman

DHRM and DVS could create training for agency recruiters on interpreting veteran resumes

- Recommendation 3: DHRM partner with DVS to develop training for agency recruiters on reviewing veteran resumes
- Training could be shared with agencies during DHRM's annual conference

*DHRM = Department of Human Resources Management; DVS = Virginia Department of Veterans Services

Recap - List of recommendations

- Recommendation 1 - Use existing FastForward program to pilot courses to help veterans obtain skills needed for critical state employee positions (e.g., corrections officer).
- Recommendation 2 - DHRM compile and share report on most difficult-to-fill state employee positions and details with DVS, VCCS, and other state agency partners.
- Recommendation 3 - DHRM partner with DVS to develop training for agency recruiters on reviewing veteran resumes.

Appendix – Relevant Virginia program websites

- Virginia Veteran Network (<https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/>)
- FastForward program (<https://fastforwardva.org/>)
- Credits2Careers portal (<https://www.credits2careers.org/>)