

UNLOCKING FEDERAL JOBS



A post-military career with the federal government is a natural fit for many officers and their spouses.

That's partially because the federal government offers a compensation package featuring good salaries, regular pay raises, health benefits, long-term health insurance, dental and vision insurance, life insurance, alternative work schedules, and options to work at home.

Sound intriguing? In the 2022 Transition Guide, you'll learn why veterans should consider this career path, how to structure your résumé and decipher common terminology used in federal job listings, when to consider federal contracting, what the new infrastructure bill means for transitioning officers seeking employment, why the top transition tips from MOAA's career experts have stood the test of time, and more.

INSIDE:

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- 🔑 YOUR FEDERAL JOB PRIMER
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Still in Service

Working for the federal government could be a good fit for transitioning servicemembers.

By Kathie Rowell

‘We know what it means to put in a hard day’s work, and we appreciate the challenges in front of us.’

— Col. Brian D. Anderson, USAF (Ret)



Private sector. Public sector. Opportunities abound in both employment categories for retiring servicemembers transitioning into new careers.

Each has its own pros and cons, said Col. Brian D. Anderson, USAF (Ret), MOAA’s senior director of Transition and Member Services.

Private sector jobs offer the challenge of something extremely different from military service and may come with a steep learning curve and a focus on profit, he said. Public sector work, to include federal employment, may be a more comfortable fit with its familiar hierarchical culture and core value of service to country.

Anderson believes veterans are particularly well suited for public sector government jobs, whether they be at the federal, state, or local level.

“We’ve cross-trained into multiple skills,” he said. “We have experience in various tasks and responsibilities. We know what it means to put in a hard day’s work, and we appreciate the challenges in front of us. Throughout the public sector, you certainly have all of those again where you’re playing a vital role. It’s a calling that’s really greater than yourself. Whether that be leadership, teamwork, or

5 Cool Federal Jobs

Job seekers sometimes don’t realize the range of federal government career opportunities, said Bill Ashton, program manager, Military Veterans Agriculture Liaison at USDA. While the USDA may be associated with farming and food production, it has jobs for everything from financial officers to real estate agents to human resources to IT specialists.

But Uncle Sam also offers unique job opportunities for those who enjoy something different.

For instance, if you:

- Love our country’s natural wonders and historic sites, a job with the National Park Service offers a chance to protect those treasures for future generations.

- Have a passion for helping others achieve their full potential, employment as a workforce development specialist for the Bureau of Indian Affairs could provide a sense of fulfillment.
- Enjoy the challenge of international diplomacy, a foreign service placement with the Department of State could be exciting.
- Know how to safely navigate all the dark corners of the World Wide Web, the FBI could use your cybersecurity skills.
- Want to contribute to the future of space travel, you could help advance exploration as an aerospace engineer for NASA.

To research thousands of job opportunities available with the federal government, go to www.usajobs.gov.

— By Kathie Rowell, a writer based in Louisiana

your individual job skills, it really translates well.”

When Capt. Jim O’Keefe, USN (Ret), retired in 2005, he had multiple job offers and decided to go with a large corporation. Five years later, he made a risky move to a smaller company and, after a year, found himself unemployed in a less robust market.

He decided to pivot and seek jobs that made use of his professional engineer license. A search of federal job listings turned up an opening for the director of the U.S. Capitol power plant that appealed to him both because of the nature of the work and the stability of a government job. When that position was filled from within, he applied and was hired as the deputy director.

“We actually run the power plant that provides steam and chilled water to heat and cool all the key buildings on Capitol Hill — the Capitol Building, House and Senate office buildings, Library of Congress, Supreme Court, botanical gardens — so it’s pretty cool,” he said.

He believes the leadership skill of caring for one’s people, which he brought with him from the Navy, has helped him implement positive changes in the workplace.

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— Capt. Jim O’Keefe, USN (Ret)

Your Federal Job Primer

Considering options for after your military service? A career in the government could be a good next step.

By Ralph Charlip

So you've decided to apply for a federal job as you transition from military service. Here's what you'll need to consider.

RÉSUMÉ

You'll need an up-to-date résumé focused on the contributions you made in each job. Federal résumés can be five pages long unless the job announcement establishes other requirements. Your federal résumé should start with a great private-sector résumé focused on your accomplishments in each job. If you're looking

for a federal job, here are six ways to make your résumé stand out.

1. Include these four items in every job you list: your highest salary (all pay and allowances); hours worked per week; name and contact information for your supervisor; and whether the reader can contact that supervisor (indicate yes, no, or contact me first). If the supervisor is deceased, indicate such. If you don't have contact information for the supervisor, put "unknown."

2. Limit your résumé to five pages. Include a section titled "Recognition" and include your personal (not unit) decorations and any campaign medals. For multiple awards of the same decoration, list the years you received the award after the award (e.g., Meritorious Service Medal, 2000, 2001, 2002).

3. Focus on accomplishments, not just responsibilities. Responsibilities are the duties you performed. Accomplishments are how well you performed them — how you saved money, saved time, reduced cycle time, or passed an inspection or audit with an outstanding rating. If you're applying for a leadership position, under responsibilities, always start with how many people you led, how much money you managed and your team's mission. For example:

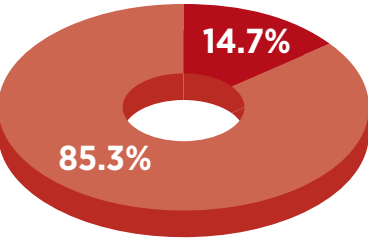
Responsibilities

Led 60 people and managed \$40M providing maintenance support for 40 aircraft in a 2,000-person organization.

Percentage of Total Workforce by Location

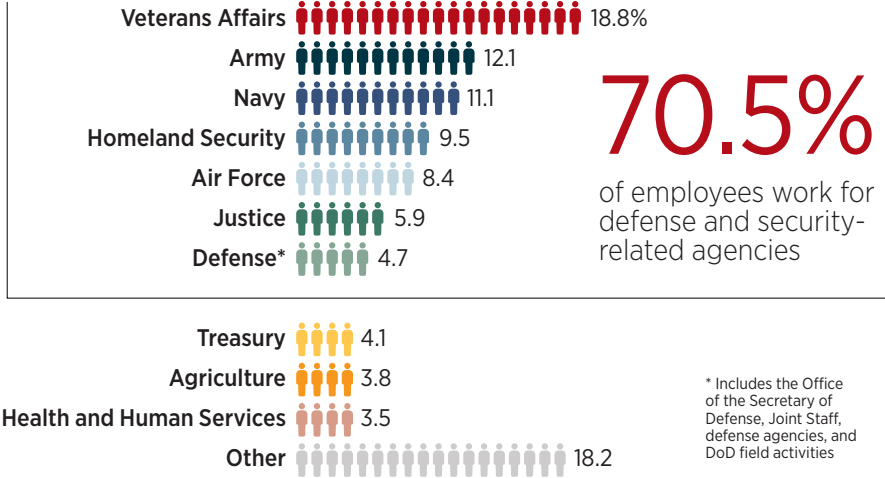
It is a common misperception that the majority of federal employees work in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. In fact, 85% of the federal workforce is outside of the D.C. region.

■ Inside D.C. metro area
■ Outside D.C. metro area



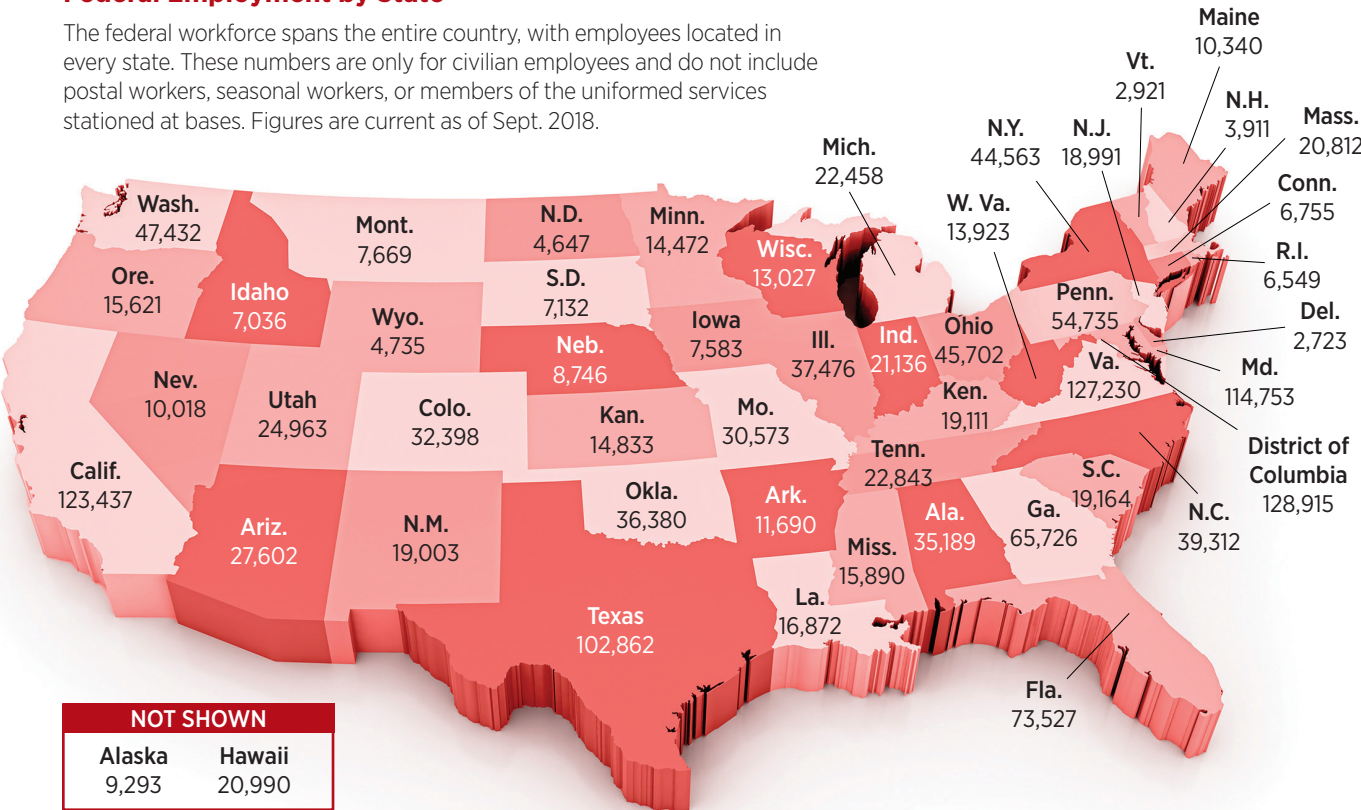
Top Employers

Defense and security-related agencies account for more than 70% of the entire federal workforce. Civilian employees at DoD agencies alone account for about 36% of the civilian federal workforce.



Federal Employment by State

The federal workforce spans the entire country, with employees located in every state. These numbers are only for civilian employees and do not include postal workers, seasonal workers, or members of the uniformed services stationed at bases. Figures are current as of Sept. 2018.



Source: FedScope via the Partnership for Public Service. Note: For security purposes, FedScope does not provide location information for employees in the following agencies: Federal Bureau of Investigation; Drug Enforcement Agency; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Secret Service and Bureau of the Mint. As a result, states may have a higher number of federal employees than what is listed in the table above.

‘Before the consult [with Ralph Charlip], I thought I had a good understanding since I was a hiring official several times in my uniformed career. I was wrong — I had an incomplete understanding until Ralph helped me.’

— Lt. Col. Noah Komnick, USMC (Ret), Life Member

4. Find the duties and the section that indicates “How You Will Be Evaluated” in the job announcement. Address as many of these as possible in the responsibilities or accomplishments section of one or more of the jobs in your résumé.

5. Civilianize your résumé. Don’t assume, even if you are applying for a job in DoD, that the reader will understand military terms. The first person who reads your résumé is a human resource specialist, who compares it to the competencies and duties in the job announcement. You want to be sure this junior person understands how you meet those requirements. You also should not expect someone from another military branch to understand your service’s acronyms or terminology. For example, while the Army calls one or more companies a battalion, the Air Force calls a company a squadron and a battalion a group. Don’t make the reader guess. And no abbreviations!

Here are some ways to translate some common military terms into civilian.

Military terminology	Civilian terminology
SCIF	Classified facility
Unified or combat command name	International military unit
Group (Air Force)	Medium size multipurpose unit
Company (Army), squadron (Air Force, Navy)	Large work center
Task Force	Task Force
Infantry specialists	Individual warrior
Wing (Air Force, Marine, Navy, Coast Guard)	Self-sustaining unit of X people

6. Finally, for each school on your résumé, include city, state, month, and the year you graduated. Leave off your grade point average and major. Include honors if you earned them.

KSAs, ECQs, AND TQs
KSAs, or Knowledge, Skills and Abilities, are found in the job announcement. Be sure your résumé reflects these KSAs. ECQs (executive core qualifications) and TQs (technical qual-

ifications) are used for Senior Executive Service applications along with your résumé. SES positions are the civilian equivalent to general officers or flag officers in the armed forces. High-ranking servicemembers can skip the GS scale, which goes to 15, and go straight into SES, where they are valued for their proven leadership skills.

There are only five ECQs, and they are the same for every SES position: Leading People, Leading Change, Business Acumen, Results, and Building Coalitions. The Office of Personnel Management has very specific guidance on how to write ECQs, including format and length (10 pages max, two per ECQ) in its Guide to Senior Executive Service Qualifications, available online.

You can expect to spend 20-40 hours preparing your ECQs. When you’re done, ask one or two SES associates to review them and give you feedback. Once you finalize your ECQs, you can use them for every SES application and almost always without any modification.

When you apply for an SES position, follow the instructions in the job announcement carefully. If there is no guidance in the announcement, try to keep your TQ responses to two pages apiece. Use a narrative style, not bullets, and remember you need to write your TQ in terms of executive leadership action.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT CATEGORIES

There are two types of job announcements: Merit Promotion and Delegated Examining Unit (DEU). In general, Merit Promotion announcements are used to recruit from existing or former civil servants, and DEU announcements are used to recruit from the general public.

You can apply to Merit Promotion announcements, unless the agency has limited its post to agency-only applicants. Be sure to check the area of consideration in the announcement. (There is no Veterans’ Preference when applying to Merit Promotion announcements — you only get access, not preference.)

DEU announcements are open to anyone. If a position is advertised as a DEU and a Merit Pro-



motion announcement, apply to both — doing so increases your chances of making the final list that is sent to the hiring official.

Veterans’ Preference (VP) applies to several different authorities allowing veterans to be considered both competitively and non-competitively for federal jobs. In common usage, it applies specifically to the priority certain veterans have in moving to the top of a referral list for job announcements open the public (DEU). Keep in mind: VP does not apply to SES positions, and in general, it does not apply to officers in the grades O-4 and above.

TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS

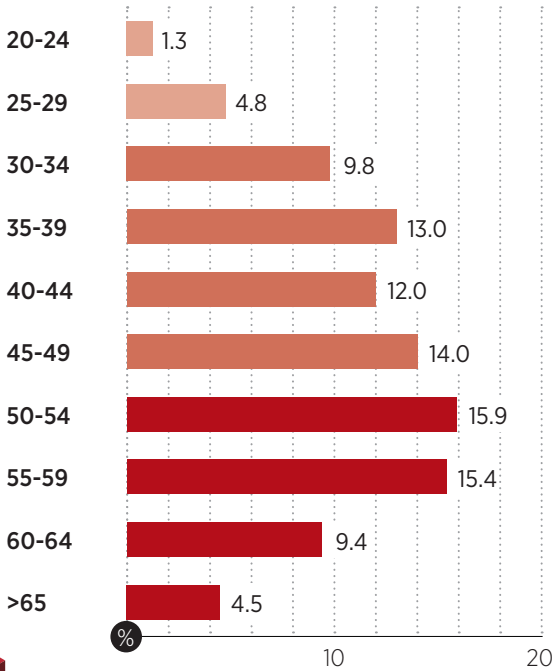
Interviews in the federal government are much the same as in the private sector. Come prepared to meet people, answer questions, and put your best “face” forward. Here are some tips to remember:

- **Dress appropriately.** Wear a dress, pant suit, or business suit; matching shoes; accessories; tie; etc. Don’t wear items from your military wardrobe — show the hiring authority you are ready to make the transition to a civilian job.
- **Don’t use military language.** Don’t expect the hiring panel to understand what a commander (rank or position) is, what a tank driver does, what a battalion or squadron is, or what the significance of a colonel is compared with a general or a private. Put everything in civilian terms.
- **Be prepared for multipart, performance-based questions.** Take notes if needed. If you need clarification during the interview, ask for it — don’t guess.
- **Be on time.** If you are going to be late, call ahead. Do your reconnaissance of the interview location. Consider traffic, where to park, etc. If it’s a virtual interview, check your platform connections.

There are only five ECQs, and they are the same for every SES position: Leading People, Leading Change, Business Acumen, Results, and Building Coalitions.

Age

The federal workforce is older than the American workforce at large. At the end of FY 2018, employees under 30 represented about 6% of the federal workforce while they constituted nearly 24% of the employed U.S. labor force in 2018.



Senior Executive Service

Nearly 70% of the members of the SES — the government’s elite cadre of senior leaders — are located in the Washington, D.C., region. The SES is less diverse in terms of gender and race than the federal workforce as a whole.

7,088
SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE EMPLOYEES
FEDERAL EMPLOYEES TO SES RATIO
263:1

	Government	U.S. Labor Force
Under 30	6.2%	23.9%
30-49	48.8%	42.6%
Over 50	45.1%	33.5%

- **Be prepared and patient.** You can expect individual as well as group (panel) interviewers. You can expect multiple interviews.
- **Stay focused.** Interview questions are almost always the same for all candidates, especially on the first round of interviews. In second- or third-round interviews, you can expect the questions to be less structured. Interviewers will be taking notes: Don’t let that distract you.
- **Do your homework.** Research Performance-Based Interviewing online — it’s a common approach to interview questions.
- **Follow up appropriately.** Send a handwritten thank-you note after the interview. If interviewers are working remotely, an email is acceptable. Do not try to contact the hiring official after an interview, except for the note; your contact should be with the HR staff unless you are directed otherwise.

WHAT HAPPENS UPON SELECTION

HR will make an official job offer by phone and then in writing. While civil service salaries are set, there is some room for negotiation. Expect the offer to be at the minimum amount of the appropriate grade. Be prepared to show your current salary via a Leave and Earnings Statement, and don’t forget to explain your military pay and allowances have tax advantages that go away with your civil service pay — it’s a critical part of your negotiation.

If you use your negotiating skills and are respectful of the agency and their investment in your future, you can maximize your compensation.

To explore more topics about federal employment, visit www.moaa.org/fedjobs.

Ralph Charlip is a retired member of the federal Senior Executive Service. He provides federal résumé assistance to MOAA Life Members.



Boost Your Small Business

Federal contracting offers growth opportunities for veteran entrepreneurs.

Are you a transitioning servicemember or veteran thinking about starting your own small business? Or maybe you have already established your small business and are exploring options to expand your reach. One question, though: How?

Before you dive into launching your new venture, opening a new location, or expanding your product line, it’s important to consider which growth strategy makes the most sense for you and your business. One option is to become a federal contractor: The U.S. government is the largest customer in the world and procures all types of goods, supplies, and services.

There are two broad categories of government contractors:

- Prime contractors bid on and win contracts directly from government agencies.
- Subcontractors join prime contractor teams, usually to provide a specific capability or product.

To compete for contracts, you will need to qualify as a small business, register as a government contractor, and ensure your business complies with federal contracting rules. It sounds daunting, but the process to register as a federal contractor may be easier than you think. You can find more information and get started on the Small Business Administration’s website.

The federal government’s goal is to award at least 3% of all federal contracting dollars to service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSB) each year, and the government limits competition for certain contracts to business in the SDVOSB program. To qualify, your small business must:

- Be a small business (check out SBA.gov/size-standards).
- Be at least 51% owned and controlled by one or more service-disabled veterans.
- Have one or more service-disabled veterans manage day-to-day operations and also make long-term decisions.

Need more help? Contact a veterans business outreach center adviser.

— By Col. Brian Anderson, USAF (Ret), director of MOAA Transition and Member Services



LEARN MORE

For more information about veteran-owned small businesses, visit www.sba.gov/business-guide/grow-your-business/veteran-owned-businesses

Infrastructure Bill Yields Opportunities

New funding means veterans should consider fields of work related to critical infrastructure initiatives.

By Joey Elliott



The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will allocate \$550 billion in federal investment toward American infrastructure within the following five years and is one of the largest hard infrastructure investment projects in decades.

The investment package will distribute the funding toward various critical infrastructure sectors including transportation, power, broadband, water, cybersecurity, and environmental remediation. The bill emphasizes investment in repairing/replacing major bridges and roads, building infrastructure for electric vehicles, improving ports and airports, improving infrastructure resiliency for extreme weather/climate-related disasters, increasing accessibility to broadband internet, and modernizing America's electrical grid.

The project is not only a massive investment in America's infrastructure system, but also in Amer-

ica's workforce. Building new infrastructure is only possible with the labor force necessary to carry out these projects. The experience and many of the hard and soft skills acquired during military service will be translatable to many of the jobs needed to complete these projects. These jobs range from civil engineering, automotive engineering, software development/cybersecurity, project management, contract management, and more.

The act is estimated to add approximately 2 million jobs per year over the course of the next decade. It also will allocate over \$85 million toward training in water, waste, energy, and construction sectors, which will provide employment opportunities for potential workers without previous industry experience. The technical skills acquired from many military occupational specialties will be easily translatable to many of the openings that will arise from this legislation. With many of these jobs/sectors already in critical demand, there will

likely be leniency in hiring employees without strict experience in these sectors.

The project will also lead to opportunities for small businesses because the U.S. government is required to consider them for contracts. In September, the House Small Business Committee announced the passage of a bill that will invest \$25 billion to small business programs with \$35 million in funding for veteran federal procurement entrepreneurship training. This investment will allow small businesses to compete with larger companies for federal contracts, and it will give small businesses the funding and training necessary to thrive.

This plan will result in one of the largest federal investment projects in U.S. history and will create a plethora of opportunities in the job market. If you are considering one of these career fields, now is a great opportunity to make the transition. ■■■

— By Joey Elliott, MOAA member service representative



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Lt. Cmdr. Bill Ashton, USN (Ret), now program manager, Military Veterans Agriculture Liaison at USDA, put his feet into private sector work first, but ultimately decided working for the federal government made more sense for him, even though friends tried to sway him with how much money he could make as a government contractor. "That's not the quality of life I wanted, so I elected to work for the federal government," said Ashton, who had small children at the time and valued the security, regular hours, reliable pay, and excellent benefits provided by the government.

It also lets him continue serving.

"I love taking care of veterans," he said. "I'm educating veterans who have no clue what USDA does."

Anderson believes one misconception about federal jobs is that they are all in Washington, D.C., when 85% are outside the Beltway, meaning there are opportunities just about everywhere.

He advises transitioning servicemembers to do a self-assessment, identifying skills, passions, and interests, then write their own job description before starting the job search.

"That way, you know what your non-negotiables are going to be," he said. "Then, research companies to see if what they have matches with you, as opposed to approaching companies first, finding out what they've got, and making a decision. Do that self-assessment, understand what your personal priorities are, and then launch into going out to make those things happen." ■■■

— By Kathie Rowell, a writer based in Louisiana

'I love taking care of veterans. I'm educating veterans who have no clue what USDA does.'

— Lt. Cmdr. Bill Ashton, USN (Ret)

Top 5 Career Transition Tips

These essentials have stood the test of time for a simple reason: They work.

As I look back over my nine years on MOAA's career transition team, I marvel at the consistency in the best practices we have recommended over the years. Perhaps I should not be surprised; there is no "secret sauce" when it comes to career transition. The best practices for a smooth transition represent measured, straightforward advice. Like any other challenging endeavor, transition is just a matter of knowing what you want to accomplish and determining the necessary steps to get there.

1. Networking is king. The nonstop refrain to "network, network, network!" is touted so often because it works. Leveraging your network is the best way to learn about opportunities. It may feel like a foreign concept to those who have been on active duty, where networking isn't required to get your next job. In the private sector, however, networking is widely practiced because it helps both sides: Job seekers get an inside track on unannounced positions, and employers get a much more targeted pool of candidates thanks to referrals. This makes networking the single most important aspect of your job search.

"My success getting hired really comes down to networking," said Kelly Pickett, a military spouse who is now the chief of command information in the U.S. Army Garrison Humphreys public affairs office in South Korea. "I walked into the office where I was interested in working and introduced myself to the supervisor. ... I put myself out there and talked to him about my experience and skills in DoD public affairs. I leveraged my communication skills to let him know I was the right person to hire. By the end of the conversation, he asked me to send him my résumé."

2. Tailored résumés. Easily the most common issue I consistently see in résumés is a lack of specific skills and abilities. The emphasis is usually on the positions and organizations in which the candidate worked, but that's not what grabs the reader. It's a matter of focus: Do your resume's bullets focus on you or on the job you held? In an effective résumé, your skills are

your superpower and should be the star of your bullets.

3. Fabulous LinkedIn. Gone are the days I would stand in front of an audience and get blank, uncomprehending stares when I talked about LinkedIn. As the largest professional online network — over 770 million professionals worldwide — LinkedIn is a very deep and very wide pool of talent for companies and recruiters, which is why they consistently flock to it. Want to be found by employers? Ensure your profile is complete, especially the skills section, and build a large, diverse network of contacts. Make it easy for employers to find you.

4. Interview preparation. I grew accustomed to incredulous smirks when recounting tales of interviews gone wrong: Cellphones going off, folks implying they wanted an "easy, kick-back job," others who were unable to give even a basic description of what the company does. It's precisely why some job seekers get tripped up — they assume the ridiculous can't happen to them. It's natural to be nervous during an interview, but the way to avoid interview disasters is simply to prepare.

5. Salary negotiation. It's common to see new job seekers who focus solely on salary, and that's a rookie mistake. It is critical to carefully consider the overall compensation package; benefits can be up to 30% of the total value. Even with an enviable military pension under your belt, there are real opportunities to significantly increase your financial footing through a robust employee benefits package — think an employer match for the 401(k). Do your research well before you transition.

Yes, in many ways this advice represents the "same old, same old," but you can take comfort in the consistency of what makes for a successful job search. The dedicated team of career transition specialists at MOAA can help by providing one-on-one career transition guidance and support across all facets of your journey. Take advantage of this amazing benefit provided as part of your paid MOAA membership! ■■■

— By Capt. Patricia Cole, USN (Ret),
program director, MOAA Career
Transition Services



Capt. Patricia Cole, USN (Ret), has assisted members of the military community with their careers for nearly a decade. She will retire later this month.

Know Your MOAA Resources

‘With your assistance, I was humbly and ecstatically informed recently I was selected for my dream ‘retirement’ job.’
— Maj. Gen. Barre Seguin, USAF (Ret), Life Member

MOAA’s team of career transition and financial and benefits education specialists has long provided information and resources via in-depth briefings, counseling sessions, and veterans services to MOAA members, their spouses, the broader military and veteran community, and military installations nationwide, including support of transition assistance programs.

Throughout the pandemic and virtual work environment, MOAA’s team of experts quickly ramped up their services and career consulting to offer much more direct support through increased educational classes, virtual career fairs, networking events, and various topic-specific webinars.

Topics and resources include:

- The latest career transition news
- Finance and military benefits education and news
- The MOAA Job Board (powered by Indeed)
- MOAA’s Career Networking Group on LinkedIn
- One-on-one, personalized career assistance,

financial education, military and veteran benefits counseling, and veterans service organization information and advice

- Résumé critique and LinkedIn profile review
- Federal hiring consultation (a MOAA Life Member benefit)
- Webinars on topics such as mentoring, networking, caregiving, and landing a federal job.

RESOURCES FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

Transition resources open and available to all military spouses include:

- “Keeping a Career on the Move” Military Spouse Symposia
- MilSpouse Remote Telework Grant Program.
- *Military Spouse Employment Guide*, available for download at www.moaa.org/publications

Spouses of MOAA Premium and Life members qualify for résumé and counseling services with MOAA’s team of transition experts. ||||



The MOAA Foundation supports career transition and professional education outreach programs open to everyone in the uniformed services community. Programs and events include virtual career fairs, finance and benefits webinars and lectures, caregiver resources, and more. For more information on The MOAA Foundation’s work, see the 2021 Impact Report on page 79.

MOAA’s transition resources include the Servicemember and Veteran Networking Forum and Hiring Event, which most recently took place in person in 2019 (pictured). The hiring event will next take place in September 2022 at the Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

SPONSORED CONTENT



VETERANS' TRANSITION FORUM

The Best Job for a Veteran: Being the Boss

Want to own a business? You are in excellent company. While veterans represent 7% of the population, they account for 13.5% of small business owners. One in seven franchise businesses is owned by veterans.

Want to learn more? Attend a free franchise and finance webinar! You will learn:

- How to acquire a franchise or start an independent business.
- How to select a business model that is right for you. (There are more than 3,500 franchise companies in the U.S.)
- Affordability. There are hundreds of franchise opportunities with a total investment under \$150,000, and financing is available. Banks are loaning money.
- Why franchise companies are recruiting veterans.
- Free services that will help you start and acquire your business.

One of our consultants will guide you throughout the business selection, vetting, financing, and acquisition process. A fellow veteran will provide free mentoring to help you investigate opportunities and guide you throughout the acquisition process.

Webinars are conducted weekly. Go to VetForum.org/online-seminar to register, or call (888) 729-5557. We have more than 80-plus years of experience in business development, employment, marketing, and financing. Our services are **free** to all veterans.





Meet Your MOAA Transition Team

The MOAA Transition Center provides trusted advice and guidance to assist with life and career decisions for currently serving members of the uniformed services, veterans, military spouses, and surviving spouses. Along with free community support afforded by the MOAA Foundation, MOAA members have exclusive access to our suite of personalized resources and services.



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Vice President,
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