



VA SkillBridge

INTRODUCTORY GUIDE

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Outreach, Transition and Economic Development

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

VBA Outreach, Transition and Economic Development:

- **Is the designated executive agent** for VA SkillBridge implementation
- **Provides planning guidance and resources** to VA organizations to develop and implement a SkillBridge program
- **Serves as the liaison** to the DOD SkillBridge program office

Each year, approximately **250,000** members of the U.S. Armed Forces



stationed at military installations worldwide will separate from active duty.



Through VA SkillBridge, VA organizations gain early access to the **extensive experience, skills** and **unmatched leadership** these Service members bring to the workforce.

VA SkillBridge Overview

SkillBridge is a Department of Defense (DOD) program that empowers transitioning Service members to gain civilian work experience through employment training, internship and apprenticeship opportunities during their final 180 days of military service. DOD SkillBridge is offered by more than 1,000 authorized public and private organizations, including VA.

In December 2019, VA and DOD signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize VA's role as a federal employment partner supporting DOD SkillBridge and to expand SkillBridge opportunities across VA. VA SkillBridge is currently offering opportunities to train transitioning Service members in career fields such as spiritual care, clinical care, clinical support and claims processing.

Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) Outreach, Transition and Economic Development (OTED) is the designated executive agent for implementing VA SkillBridge across the enterprise.

VA SKILLBRIDGE SPOTLIGHT



The **Warrior Training Advancement Course (WARTAC)** is a 10-12-week education and employment program for wounded warriors and transitioning Service members. Participants learn the skillset of a Veterans Service Representative (VSR) (GS-0996-07/10) and complete a VBA training program during their final 180 days of active-duty service. Successful completion leads to a hiring interview at one of VBA's 56 regional offices. Since 2015, WARTAC has fielded approximately 70 cohorts and offered positions to more than 1,400 graduates at VBA regional offices worldwide.

Why VA SkillBridge?

Through VA SkillBridge, VA organizations gain early access to the extensive experience, skills and unmatched leadership Service members bring to the workforce. VA SkillBridge also provides VA organizations with the opportunity to train and recruit for hard-to-fill positions.

VA organizations can leverage an existing job training and career development program or develop a new program to accommodate SkillBridge participants. The length of each program is determined by the training requirements to learn the skillset of the position but cannot exceed 180 days. Service members participating in VA SkillBridge continue to receive their DOD salary and benefits, at no cost to the SkillBridge program host/VA organization.

To learn more, contact:

TEDSkillBridge.VBACO@va.gov

Step-by-Step Guide for Implementing a VA SkillBridge Program

1. **VA organizations** choose one of their existing job training and career development programs or develop a new program to meet their specific workforce needs. Programs range from three to twelve weeks. Program length is determined by the level of training required to successfully learn the skillset of the VA SkillBridge position.
2. The **DOD SkillBridge program office** approves the VA SkillBridge program for inclusion in the DOD SkillBridge portfolio and advertises VA SkillBridge opportunities to qualifying Service members at installations and via the DOD SkillBridge website at <https://dodskillbridge.usalearning.gov/>.
3. **OTED** provides guidance and resources to the hosting VA organization during the development, implementation and execution phases of the program. OTED also serves as a liaison with the DOD SkillBridge program office.
4. **VA organizations** manage program logistics, select participants, facilitate training, interview graduates and hire successful program graduates as VA civilian employees, as authorized.
5. **DOD military installation commanders** authorizes military command release for Service member participation in a VA SkillBridge program.

Transitioning Service members of all ranks and Service branches, including the Coast Guard and reserve components, may be eligible to participate in VA SkillBridge. They must have completed at least 180 continuous days on active duty, must be within their final 180 days of military service and receive the necessary approvals from their chain of command. Service members are encouraged to secure final out-processing from their command before participating in a VA SkillBridge program, to allow for a smoother transition from military to civilian life.

VA SkillBridge Program Readiness Checklist

To be a successful VA SkillBridge program host, VA organizations should consider the factors listed below. *Note: This is not an exhaustive list, nor do all factors need to apply.*

- Has **developed or have the resources to develop** and conduct a clearly defined job training and career development program designed to enhance opportunities for transitioning Service members
- Has **vacancies at general schedule (GS) 6** (or equivalent) and above
- Has **considerable staffing needs** (current and forecasted)
- Requires **specialized training** to support your mission and can adapt training for transitioning Service members
- Has **designated VA training sites** and/or can deliver training on military installations
- Can **ensure a high probability of employment** for VA SkillBridge graduates
- Offers **geographic flexibility in permanent job placement**

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: How does VA SkillBridge align with the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)?

TAP is a five-day mandatory program attended by Service members during their final year of military service to support a smooth transition to civilian life. VA facilitates one day of TAP, providing information about VA benefits and services. VA SkillBridge is a separate, optional program offered to transitioning Service members that provides employment training, internship and apprenticeship opportunities for specific careers within VA. Service members are highly encouraged to participate in TAP before participating in a VA SkillBridge program.

Q2: Can an organization develop and execute more than one SkillBridge program at a time?

Yes. If an organization has vacancies for multiple positions, it can develop and execute multiple VA SkillBridge programs to run concurrently. There may be opportunities to easily consolidate your VA SkillBridge program development, management and reporting, depending on the program types.

Q3. How do transitioning Service members apply to participate in a VA SkillBridge program?

Transitioning Service members can learn about SkillBridge opportunities, check specific Service eligibility requirements, and submit their applications on the DOD SkillBridge website at <https://dodskillbridge.usalearning.gov/>. VA SkillBridge program hosts are required to develop an applicant tracking system to receive and monitor applications.

Q4. Are participating transitioning Service members limited to the geographical area where the VA SkillBridge program is offered?

No. Transitioning Service members are authorized to participate in VA SkillBridge programs outside of their assigned location/geographical area. While participating in VA SkillBridge, Service members continue to receive their basic housing allowance based on their assigned duty station. However, travel expenses to the VA SkillBridge location and return travel in the event they are recalled by their unit commander, are the responsibility of the Service member.

**To learn more or to get started,
contact the VA SkillBridge Team at:**

TEDSkillBridge.VBACO@va.gov