



Serving Those Who Served

2026 Veterans Conference

July 8 -10, 2026 | Washington, DC

Agenda

*Provided conference meals: Thursday (breakfast, lunch);
Friday (breakfast)*

TUESDAY, JULY 7

- 8:30a – 5:00p **VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING** Independence HI
- 12:00p – 6:00p **HOSPITALITY DESK** Independence Foyer
*Check in & pick up your name badge to attend all sessions

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

- 7:00a – 11:00a **EXHIBITOR CHECK-IN & SET UP** Independence Foyer
- 7:00a – 7:00p **HOSPITALITY DESK** Independence Foyer
*Check in & pick up your name badge to attend all sessions
- 8:30a – 11:15a **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING LISTENING SESSIONS** Farragut Square/Lafayette Park

NOTE: These listening sessions are for state workforce agency staff only. This includes JVSG staff (DVOPs, LVERs, Consolidated Staff and JVSG Coordinators). Wagner Peyser, WIOA partners and state agency administrators who oversee or work with Veterans are also welcome. Individuals may choose to register for either session, but not both.

Pre-registration & Name Badge ARE required. Space is limited!

8:30a – 9:45a	Listening Session A with U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service & the National Veterans Training Institute Moderator Sarah Bierman* , Deputy Director, Grants and Training, U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service	
10:00a – 11:15a	Listening Session B with U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service & the National Veterans Training Institute Moderator Sarah Bierman* , Deputy Director, Grants and Training, U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service	
11:30a – 7:00p	EXHIBITOR SHOWCASE	Independence Foyer
12:30p – 1:30p	OPENING CEREMONIES	Independence Ballroom

WELCOME TO THE 13TH ANNUAL VETERANS CONFERENCE

Sarah Morrissey, Director of Employment Services Bureau, New Hampshire Employment Security

Anna Hunter*, Assistant Director, Arizona Department of Economic Security and NASWA Veterans Affairs Committee Chair

PRESENTATION OF THE COLORS

Joint Forces Color Guard of the Military District of Washington*

NATIONAL ANTHEM & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

April Torregiante, Vice President of Program and Client Services, CareerSource Tampa Bay

WELCOME TO WASHINGTON, DC

Julian Purdy*, Director, DC Mayor's Office on Veterans Affairs

INTRODUCTION OF THE NASWA VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEMBERS & RECOGNITION OF ALL VETERANS IN ATTENDANCE

Lori Adams, Senior Policy Advisor, NASWA

ICEBREAKER

Veterans at each table will share their answers to these questions with each other:

1. What was your favorite MRE? Least favorite?
2. What countries did you visit during your time in service?
3. What was your first job after the military and how did you get it?
4. What do you miss about your time in service?

NASWA WELCOME

Hear from Scott B. Sanders, NASWA President and CEO, as he provides a brief update of what has been happening at NASWA over the past year, with a focus on new initiatives, projects, and programs to benefit your state or territory and its residents.

Scott B. Sanders, President & CEO, NASWA

A WORD FROM OUR GOLD SPONSORS

1:30p – 2:00p	NETWORKING BREAK	Independence Foyer
2:00p – 3:00p	PLENARY SESSION	Independence Ballroom

BEYOND ACCESS: FIXING THE VETERAN WORKFORCE SYSTEM WHERE IT ACTUALLY BREAKS

We do not have a veteran talent problem. We have a translation, alignment, and accountability problem. The system has programs, partners, job fairs, referrals, and plenty of activity, but too often it still leaves veterans underemployed and employers unprepared to convert military experience into workforce value. This session will challenge the field to move beyond access and focus on what actually drives outcomes: role alignment, employer readiness, retention, and long-term economic mobility.

Rob Arndt*, CEO & Founder, BufferSprings

3:00p – 3:10p	TABLE TALK	Independence Ballroom
3:10p – 3:55p	PLENARY SESSION	Independence Ballroom

MOVING FROM \$BILLIONS IN GUESSES TO \$693M IN PROVEN SUCCESSES

Asking HR gatekeepers to "hire heroes" is an operational failure. For-profit placement firms dominate the talent landscape because they don't beg corporate recruiters for favors—they deliver talent solutions straight to executive decision-makers who command capital and headcount. This session delivers a masterclass on full-cycle talent deployment. Discover the regional blueprint that bypassed

administrative roadblocks to engineer a \$693M economic reality. Learn how to cultivate direct hiring-manager access, optimize your workflows, and position your candidates as high-value corporate assets.

Sultan Camp*, Director, Hampton Roads Veterans Employment Centers

3:55p – 4:05p **TABLE TALK** Independence Ballroom

4:05p – 4:35p **NETWORKING BREAK** Independence Foyer

4:35p – 5:20p **PLENARY SESSION** Independence Ballroom

WORDS THAT WORK, BUILDING EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE FOR VETERANS WORKFORCE SUCCESS

Strengthening Veteran Workplace Integration, Resilience and Communication Through Emotional Intelligence

Veteran hiring is only the first step; successful integration requires communication, workplace flexibility, and emotional resilience. This session equips leaders, workforce professionals, and service providers with practical emotional intelligence strategies to support veterans transitioning into civilian teams, improve communication under stress, and foster healthier, more effective workplace relationships.

Bill Stierle, Owner, Subtext Solutions

5:20p – 5:30p **TABLE TALK** Independence Ballroom

5:30p – 7:00p **WELCOME RECEPTION with Exhibitors** Independence Foyer

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THURSDAY, JULY 9

7:30a – 5:00p **HOSPITALITY DESK** Independence Foyer

**Check in & pick up your name badge to attend all sessions*

7:30a – 5:00p **EXHIBITOR SHOWCASE** Independence Foyer

7:30a – 8:30a **HOSTED BREAKFAST** Independence Ballroom

MARK SANDERS AWARD PRESENTATION

The 2026 Mark Sanders Award for Exceptional Service to Veterans, with special emphasis on eligible Veterans with Qualifying Employment Barriers, Transitioning Service Members and eligible spouses, recognizes the efforts of an entire one-stop career center, state, region or initiative whose efforts to serve Veterans go above and beyond the scope of mandatory service provision. This award is named in honor of Mark Sanders, who, during his distinguished career with the California Employment Development Department and in leadership positions with the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, was untiring in his efforts to promote excellence in services to Disabled Veterans. The workforce center in Sacramento, California, is named in his honor.

Presenters: **Scott B. Sanders**, President and CEO, National Association of State Workforce Agencies

Sarah Morrissey, Director of Employment Services Bureau, New Hampshire Employment Security, NASWA Mark Sanders Committee member

Nominees include:

Florida – CareerSource Palm Beach County

New Jersey – Ocean County One-Stop Career Center

Tennessee – Knoxville American Job Center

PUTTING THE SOLDIER FIRST

The Fort Hood Transition Assistance Program and Military to Civilian Employment Program

The Fort Hood Transition Assistance Program and the Texas Workforce collaboration has been in place since 2013, and Texas was one of four states to participate in the Army/DOLETA Joint Reduction of UCX project. Lessons learned from that grant along with the willingness of Ft Hood, TWC, Workforce Solutions Central Texas, employers, community colleges and other community partners to work together has made the Ft Hood TAP program one of the best throughout the Army.

Moderator: **James (Rod) Rodriguez***, President & Co-Founder, The Rodriguez Group, LLC

Speakers: **Sam Blanks***, North Central Texas Regional Manager, Texas Veterans Leadership Program, Texas Workforce Commission

Bob Gear*, Director, Texas Veterans Leadership Program, Texas Workforce Commission

Mark Phillips*, Division Chief, TAP, U.S. Army Fort Hood, DHR

Eliseo Torres*, Veterans Career Advisor, Texas Veterans Commission

Alan Wedding*, Military Liaison, Workforce Solutions, Central Texas

10:00a – 10:10a **TABLE TALK** Independence Ballroom

10:10a – 10:40a **NETWORKING BREAK** Independence Foyer

10:40a – 11:40a **CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

BREAKOUT 1 – ARTS PROGRAMMING: A PATHWAY TO WELL-BEING IN THE MILITARY COMMUNITY | LAFAYETTE PARK

This presentation explores how creative expression strengthens well-being and mental health for veterans. We show how adaptive, accessible arts programming reduces barriers, builds community, and supports identity. Drawing on participant stories and diverse artistic practices, grounded in four years of programming, we illustrate art's impact in non-clinical settings. Attendees will gain practical, inclusive strategies for serving diverse military populations.

Speakers: **Daniya Baisubanova**, WAM Program Specialist, Washington State Arts Commission, Wellness, Arts and the Military (WAM) Program
Gabriella Smith, Administrative Assistant, Washington State Arts Commission, Wellness, Arts and the Military (WAM) Program

BREAKOUT 2 – MILITARY VETERAN RETENTION IN CORPORATE AMERICA | INDEPENDENCE FG

This workshop examines why veteran retention remains a challenge for Corporate America and what employers must do differently to achieve lasting employment outcomes. Participants will learn how to identify common retention breakdowns affecting veterans and how compliance requirements intersect with effective retention strategies. Attendees will also gain practical recommendations and best practices they can use to guide employers toward stronger onboarding, management engagement, and workplace cultures that support long-term veteran success.

Speaker: **Lloyd Knight***, UPS Veteran Affairs Manager, VETLANTA President

BREAKOUT 3 – FROM COMBAT TO CORPORATE: NAVIGATING THE EMOTIONAL TERRAIN OF CIVILIAN LIFE | INDEPENDENCE HI

Transitioning from structured military culture to the civilian workplace can feel like stepping into an unpredictable maze — especially for veterans managing stress,

anxiety, or PTSD. This session uses Emotional & Thinking Intelligence (ETI) to help veterans understand how training, beliefs, and survival-based responses influence thinking, behavior, and communication in civilian environments. Participants will learn tools to reduce anxiety, manage triggers, decode workplace expectations, and rebuild confidence to navigate new roles, new cultures, and a new sense of identity.

Speaker: **Bill Stierle**, Owner, Subtext Solutions

BREAKOUT 4 – FROM SERVICE TO STABILITY: FINANCIAL TOOLS AND JOB STRATEGIES FOR VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES | INDEPENDENCE DE

Disabled Veterans often face complex barriers to finding work, including navigating public benefits, managing income, and planning for long-term financial stability. Financial education and targeted resources can support improved career opportunities and economic outcomes. Presenters will introduce the [**Secure Your Financial Future: A Financial Toolkit for People with Disabilities**](#), a comprehensive resource designed to help individuals make informed decisions at every stage of their journey, and an overview of Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts.

Speakers: **Nancy Boutot**, Subject Matter Expert on Advancing Economic Self-Sufficiency for People with Disabilities, LEAD Center, National Disability Institute

Timothy Elliott*, Program Outreach Specialist, Office of Home & Community Living, New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities

Jody Ellis, Director, ABLE National Resource Center, National Disability Institute

BREAKOUT 5 – HELP WANTED! EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN AMERICA'S DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE | FRANKLIN SQUARE

Want to know where the jobs are? Come to this session to find out about a new initiative to fill the skills gap and explore thousands of jobs now available in the Defense Industrial Base. The presenters will share information about training, wages, and where to learn about who's hiring in all 50 states, DC and the territories.

Speakers: **Kris Rick***, IBAS Workforce Program Manager, Contractor Warfighting Investments, Resourcing & Execution (WIRE) Directorate OASW for Industrial Base Policy, OUSW for Acquisition & Sustainment

Bryant Streett*, IBAS Deputy Workforce Sector Lead, Contractor for Warfighting Investments, Resourcing & Execution (WIRE) Directorate OASW for Industrial Base Policy, OUSW for Acquisition & Sustainment

BREAKOUT 6 – MISSION READY: PREPARING VETERANS AND THOSE WHO SERVICE THEM FOR THE AGE OF AI | FARRUGUT SQUARE

Mission Ready is not just another AI training, but a first-of-its-kind, veteran-centered AI readiness cohort designed as a deliberate pipeline for building community, skills, and identity for future purpose post service. Built for veterans, by veterans, the program emphasizes connection and community by equipping veterans, transitioning service members, and military-connected professionals with mission-aligned AI confidence and capability through accessible, ethical, and human-centered instruction. During this interactive session, attendees will also experience a hands-on Micro-Mission AI Learning Lab.

Speakers: **Ted Adair***, Founder & President, The Oath & Oak LLC
Mika Cross*, Workplace Transformation Strategist, Advisor + CEO & Founder, Strategy@Work LLC
Kris Saling*, Senior Military & Organizational Analytics Leader, Founder & Principal, D4C LLC

12:00p – 1:15p **HOSTED LUNCH** Independence Ballroom

1:15p – 2:15p **CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

BREAKOUT 1 – BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS SERVICES NETWORK FOR EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS | LAFAYETTE PARK

This session explores how intentional, value-driven social media engagement can strengthen employer relationships and increase visibility. Attendees will leave with actionable ideas they can immediately apply, regardless of organizational size or technical skill level. The session is designed for workforce and business services professionals seeking realistic, low-cost approaches to employer engagement and demonstrates how small, intentional shifts in outreach strategy can lead to stronger connections and increased employer participation.

Speakers: **Joe Bodnar***, Local Veterans Employment Representative, PA CareerLink
Thomas Duvall*, Local Veterans Employment Representative, PA CareerLink
Heidi Sulderits*, Local Veterans Employment Representative, PA CareerLink

BREAKOUT 2 – THE VETERANS CONSORTIUM: LEGAL SERVICES FOR VETERANS | INDEPENDENCE FG

Since 1992, The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program (TVC) has offered free legal representation to Veterans, their families and survivors in appealing denials of VA disability benefit claims to the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC). In 2017, TVC initiated a Discharge Upgrade Program, which offers legal representation for Veterans who received an other than honorable discharge. The Women Veterans Legal Assistance Program began in 2020, as did their Veterans Naturalization Assistance Program. This session will provide an overview of all these programs and services TVC offers to veterans.

Speaker: **Colleen E. Miller**, Deputy Director, Volunteer Outreach, Education and Placement, The Veterans Consortium

BREAKOUT 3 – WHEN GOOD PROGRAMS STALL: HOW COMMUNICATIONS BREAKDOWNS IMPACT VETERAN OUTCOMES AND HOW TO FIX THEM | INDEPENDENCE HI

This session explores how communication breakdowns can limit the effectiveness of well-designed workforce programs serving veterans. Participants will gain practical tools to improve how expectations are communicated, how conversations are guided, and how progress is reinforced to support better outcomes. Attendees will learn how to recognize communication patterns that create delays, and how to implement strategies that improve clarity, trust and forward movement.

Speaker: **Stephan Cote**, Leadership Coach

BREAKOUT 4 – FROM SERVICE TO STRATEGY: A PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSLATING MILITARY EXPERIENCE INTO EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES | INDEPENDENCE DE

Veterans and transitioning service members often enter the civilian workspace with strong skills and readiness yet hiring outcomes don't always reflect that potential. The gap is frequently not capability- it is how that experience is described and understood. This workshop introduces a framework workforce professionals can use to translate military experience into clear, employer-relevant language. Participants will practice identifying transferable skills, reframing service roles for civilian jobs, and aligning veteran narratives with employer needs.

Speaker: **Lindsay R. Watson**, Workforce Strategist, FIA NOW Employment Solutions

BREAKOUT 5 – BEYOND THE RESUME: TRANSLATING MILITARY EXPERIENCE INTO WORKFORCE READINESS | FRANKLIN SQUARE

As employers move toward skills-based workforce strategies, many are still struggling to identify, validate, and apply transferable skills in practical ways. This session will explore how military experience can be translated into language, competencies, and verified skills that employers understand and trust. Panelists will discuss the promise and challenges of skills-based transformation, what employers are learning

in practice, and how better translation and validation systems can create stronger outcomes for both organizations and veteran talent.

- Moderator: **Jim Beamesderfer***, President & Founder, JB Strategic Solutions
- Speakers: **Maureen Devine-Ahl**, Director of Programs & Community Impact, Dog Tag Bakery
- Marie Gill**, Chief Executive Officer & Cofounder, Aetheon
- Robin Johnson***, Senior Manager, Military Connected & Veteran Program, Boeing
- Elizabeth Kohm**, Manager Foundation Programs, SHRM
- Daniel Perkins**, Director, Penn State Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness

BREAKOUT 6 – FROM MILITARY MISSION TO CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT: HOW STATE-LED SKILLBRIDGE PROGRAMS FUEL ECONOMIC GROWTH | FARRUGUT SQUARE

Every year, hundreds of thousands of service members leave the military. Many don't remain where they're last stationed. Through the DoD SkillBridge program, States could set a clear path to local employment opportunities. SkillBridge is the "anchor" that attracts them and keeps them (and their tax revenue) in-State.

- Speaker: **Dave Schantz***, Founder & Principal, Military Onboard Solutions

2:15p – 2:30p **TRANSITION BREAK** Independence Foyer

2:30p – 3:30p **CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

BREAKOUT 1 – SERVICE DOGS, WORKPLACE INCLUSION AND VETERAN HIRING: WHAT EMPLOYERS & HUMAN RESOURCES NEED TO KNOW | LAFAYETTE PARK

Veterans with disabilities are increasingly using service dogs to sustain employment and successfully transition into civilian workplaces. This interactive training provides a clear, ADA-grounded, operational framework for distinguishing service dogs, therapy dogs, emotional support animals (ESAs), and pets-at-work programs—and for applying those distinctions in workplace accommodation conversations. Participants will learn what HR can and cannot ask, how to handle unclear cases lawfully, and how to reduce conflict in environments involving allergies, fear of dogs, cultural concerns, and safety-sensitive roles.

- Speakers: **Andrea Hering**, Executive Director, Crisis Response Canines
- Danique Masingill**, Founder & Executive Director, The Hero Academy

BREAKOUT 2 – MILITARY TO CIVILIAN REINTEGRATION PROGRAMS: HOW VSI AND BUDDY WATCH BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN SERVICE & CIVILIAN LIFE | INDEPENDENCE FG

Veterans deserve sustained support beyond initial transition programs. SixWatch's VSI and Buddy Watch extend the transition pipeline: VSI provides career training, industry certifications, and job readiness — while Buddy Watch pairs veterans with trained peer advocates through compatibility matching, automated wellness monitoring, and AI-generated action plans. Attendees will learn how to build bridge programs that sustain veteran engagement and employment outcomes long after the initial intake ends.

Speaker: **Odie Gray***, Founder & Executive Director, SixWatch

BREAKOUT 3 – USING TECHNOLOGY TO HELP STATES ALIGN VETERAN SKILLSETS TO THE CURRENT JOB MARKET | INDEPENDENCE HI

One of the hottest topics of conversation in today's hiring environment is utilization of Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning to facilitate candidates' ability to look for jobs that match their skills to open roles and for companies to utilize technology to streamline and expedite the hiring process. This workshop will provide attendees an overview of Oplign, a free resource that can assist in their efforts translating a veteran's skills into open roles in the current job market.

Speakers: **Mike Grow***, CEO, Oplign

Beau Higgins*, Vice President of Operations, Oplign

BREAKOUT 4 – PUTTING THE VETERAN FIRST: HOW DVOPS AND LVERS BUILD STRONG COALITIONS AND RESOURCES | INDEPENDENCE DE

This workshop presents a veteran-centered approach to coalition building, where DVOPs and LVERs serve as the core drivers of coordinated service delivery. Participants will learn how aligning these roles with community partners improves referrals, strengthens employer engagement, and leads to better employment outcomes. The session also covers practical steps for building accountable coalitions and selecting reliable partners, with a focus on improving veteran hiring outcomes.

Speakers: **Craig Desmarais***, Local Veterans Employment Representative, MassHire Department of Career Services

Baotien Nguyen*, Local Veterans Employment Representative, MassHire Department of Career Services

BREAKOUT 5 – PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS: RESOURCES FOR MILITARY-AFFILIATED ENTREPRENEURS | FRANKLIN SQUARE

An insightful panel on veteran entrepreneurship, where experts will share valuable tips and resources to empower attendees' entrepreneurial journeys. Participants will learn about various pathways to entrepreneurship, focusing on lessons learned,

barriers to entry, and organizations supporting military-affiliated entrepreneurs. Additionally, attendees will gain practical insights into building a robust support network. By the end of the session, participants will leave with a comprehensive list of resources and best practices to enhance their entrepreneurial endeavors.

Moderator: **Meg Hendricks***, Vice President, Head of Military & Veterans Affairs, Fiserv

Speakers: **Brian Alvarado***, Senior Director of Strategic Impact and Engagement, Hiring Our Heroes

Kevin Barber*, Assistant Administrator, Office of Veterans Business Development, U.S. Small Business Administration

Gabi Bell, Founder and CEO, Organized Q

Autumn Woodward, Chief Development Officer, Dog Tag, Inc.

TBA, D'Aniello Institute for Veterans & Military Families

BREAKOUT 6 – STATE PROMISING PRACTICES | FARRUGUT SQUARE

Washington: Driving Employment Outcomes in Rural Areas

A veteran-facing service model means the system adjusts to the veteran, not the other way around. In rural areas, this requires intentional planning around travel time so that in-person support is delivered where and when it is most needed. By prioritizing accessibility, clear communication, and individualized services based on each veteran's goals and barriers, services remain responsive even across large geographic regions.

Speaker: **Bruce Davis***, Consolidated Veterans Service Representative, Washington State Employment Security Department

Washington: Experienced Informed Navigation for Stronger Employment Outcomes Among Women Veterans

Women veterans bring exceptional leadership, technical skill, and adaptability to the civilian workforce, yet they often navigate systems not designed with their experiences in mind. Many encounter identity invisibility, assumptions about their service, or pressure to “prove” their veteran status, all of which influence how they engage with workforce programs. This session will cover a strengths-based approach that acknowledges women veterans' lived experiences and redesigns service pathways to improve trust, engagement, and employment outcomes.

Speaker: **Kodie Misiura***, Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist, Washington State Employment Security Department

BREAKOUT 7 – ALL ABOUT ADDITIONAL POPULATIONS IN THE JVSG PROGRAM | INDEPENDENCE BALLROOM

Jobs for Veterans State Grant eligibility is established through two distinct laws: 38 U.S. Code, Chapter 41, authorizes and defines eligible veterans and eligible persons, while annual appropriations temporarily authorize JVSG to serve what DOL-VETS refers to as “additional populations.” In this session, VETS will explore how these populations have changed over time and take a deep dive into who the additional populations are, how VETS defines applicable terms, and what makes the authorization temporary.

- Speakers: **Sarah Bierman***, Deputy Director, Grants and Training, U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service
Natalie Daugherty, Management & Program Analyst, U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service
Bek Haydin*, National Jobs for Veterans State Grant Lead, U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service

3:30p – 4:00p **NETWORKING BREAK** Independence Foyer

4:00p – 5:00p **CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

BREAKOUT 1 – ELEVATING VETERAN SERVICES WITH THE NATIONAL VETERANS TRAINING INSTITUTE'S LEARNING ECOSYSTEM | LAFAYETTE PARK

Join the NVTI team for an engaging and interactive session designed to highlight how today's evolving learning ecosystem is equipping veteran service professionals with the tools they need to succeed. This presentation will explore enhancements to existing courses and the launch of new learning opportunities. Attendees will gain insight into innovative offerings such as simulation-based learning and specialized courses focused on interview coaching, engaging employers to advance veteran employment outcomes, and supporting transitioning service members.

- Speakers: **Alexandra Bergeron**, Student Services Lead, Management Concepts
Mark Hannibal, Project Manager, Management Concepts
Dr. Rebecca Kelley, Curriculum Lead, Management Concepts
Kate McCord, Chief of Data & Performance, U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service

BREAKOUT 2 – STATE PROMISING PRACTICES | INDEPENDENCE FG

Arizona: The Veterans Toolkit

Transitioning into a new job can be a financial challenge and many Arizona Veterans were ready to work but financial barriers for necessary work equipment were preventing them from beginning employment. To combat this barrier, the

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services partnered with Arizona Department of Economic Security and the Arizona Coalition for Military Families (ACMF) to provide Military Veterans with the Veteran Toolkit to help fund expenses associated with beginning employment.

Speaker: **Victor Cardenas***, JVSG Coordinator, Arizona Department of Economic Security

Colorado: Building Community Relationships: Collaborative Hiring Events and Networking for Veterans and Military Spouse

Colorado's best-practice presentation will showcase several ongoing veterans and business customer service projects in Colorado. The presentation will cover two large-scale job fair initiatives, a major informational event, targeted recurring hiring events, and a networking event series. This session aims to provide actionable models for other states to adapt and implement these successful projects.

Speakers: **Martin Bangert***, Veterans Employment Representative, Arapahoe Douglas Works!

Matthew Broker*, Regional Veterans Employment Representative, Colorado Department of Labor & Employment

BREAKOUT 3 – FROM TRANSLATION TO RETENTION: ETHICAL AI EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT AND VETERAN HIRING CREDITS TO STRENGTHEN CAREER PATHWAYS | INDEPENDENCE HI

This interactive workshop shows how workforce professionals can use ethical AI to translate military experience into civilian skills, resumes, and career pathways while helping employers improve veteran hiring and retention. Participants will learn using a military-to-civilian skills translation worksheet that helps HR and workforce professionals map military service into civilian competencies, job titles and interview language, and a 30/60/90 day Veteran onboarding and retention framework.

Speakers: **Dr. Andrea Grannum-Mosely***, Founder & CEO MosAL Consulting LLC

BREAKOUT 4 – SAFE TO SERVE AGAIN: ADVANCING VETERAN WELL-BEING THROUGH INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES | INDEPENDENCE DE

Attendees will learn the basic tenets of creating a welcoming workplace environment for veterans, including how to comply with USERRA. Attendees will learn strategies for creating psychological safety, veteran-focused employee resource groups (ERGs), and mentoring programs. Together, these research-based strategies enable organizations to attract, retain, and support veterans by fostering cultures of psychological safety, belonging, and well-being.

Speakers: **Shari Collins**, Founder/CEO, Shari Collins Consulting
Sean Fisher, Founder/CEO, Fisher Mediation Group

BREAKOUT 5 – STATE PROMISING PRACTICES | FRANKLIN SQUARE

Tennessee: Justice-Involved Veterans – Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court

The Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court is a model for communities seeking to serve military members facing legal issues. By focusing on rehabilitation, mental health care, and community reintegration, the court addresses the needs of veterans with compassion and understanding. The court proves when justice and support collaborate, the results can be transformative for both individuals and the community. Judge Goble, with the aid of state legislators, recently extended services to five surrounding counties.

Speakers: **Jeffery Dent***, Director of Veterans Services, Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development
The Honorable Kenneth Goble Jr.*, presiding General Sessions, Juvenile Court and Veterans Treatment Court Judge, Montgomery County, TN

BREAKOUT 6 – BUILDING COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS | FARRUGUT SQUARE

Building strong community relationships for veteran support organizations requires intentional trust-building, collaboration, and consistent presence. Veterans often interact with multiple systems (VA, nonprofits, local government, healthcare, employment services), so organizations that work well together create a more effective safety net.

Speaker: **Jeanette Gilles**, Director of The Network, America's Warrior Partnership

BREAKOUT 7 – THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPLIANCE IN THE JVSG PROGRAM | INDEPENDENCE BALLROOM

Join VETS staff for an interactive workshop exploring difficult situations that Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) funded staff and program managers face in their jobs, potential solutions, and the consequences of noncompliance with JVSG program legislation and policy. Through “What Would You Do?” scenario discussions, we will examine how resulting sanctions may affect the recipient organization and discuss how services to the public and to JVSG-eligible participants are impacted.

Speakers: **Sarah Bierman***, Deputy Director, Grants and Training, U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service
Natalie Daugherty, Management & Program Analyst, U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service
Bek Haydin*, National Jobs for Veterans State Grant Lead, U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service

FRIDAY, JULY 10

7:30a – 12:00p	HOSPITALITY DESK	Independence Foyer
	*Check in & pick up your name badge to attend all sessions	
7:30a – 12:00p	EXHIBITOR SHOWCASE	Independence Foyer
7:30a – 8:30a	HOSTED BREAKFAST	Independence Ballroom

8:30a – 9:30a **CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

BREAKOUT 1 – BEYOND THE HIRE: CLINICAL INSIGHTS FOR TRAUMA-INFORMED VETERAN MANAGEMENT | INDEPENDENCE FG

This session provides actionable, trauma-informed management strategies to handle workplace stressors, improve communication, & foster an environment where veterans & employers both thrive. At the end of the workshop, audience members will identify three common workplace triggers for veterans with trauma histories and their behavioral manifestations, along with applying the “Four R’s” of trauma-informed care to standard corporate performance management processes.

Speaker: **Taylor Perry-Crawford**, Readjustment Counselor, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

BREAKOUT 2 – BUILDING AMERICA’S TALENT PIPELINES: COMMUNITY-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR THE SKILLED TRADES AND EMERGING INDUSTRIES | INDEPENDENCE HI

America is experiencing historic labor shortages across construction, manufacturing, automotive, technology, and AI-driven industries. Employers report a shortage of over 650,000 construction workers, 500,000 manufacturing roles, and 3.5 million unfilled tech jobs globally by 2030. Attendees will receive actionable strategies for launching or strengthening community-based skilled trades pipelines rooted in public-private partnership and labor market analytics.

Moderator: **Tom Downs***, Executive Director, Programs and Strategic Engagement, Hiring Our Heroes

Speakers: **Jana Barresi**, Vice President, Government Affairs, Lowe’s Companies, Inc.

Tanya Borachi, Director of Education and Workforce Initiatives, Federal City Council

Clarence Johnson*, Associate Director, Skilled Trades and Transportation Programs, Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA Workforce)

BREAKOUT 3 – RECONNECTING VETERANS TO OPPORTUNITY: USING NLx TOOLS TO STRENGTHEN VETERAN EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES | INDEPENDENCE DE

Designed as a practical, training-oriented session, this presentation invites participants to rediscover NLx tools they may already know while exploring new ways to apply them in veteran-focused service delivery. Attendees will walk through NLx resources that support recruitment, employer engagement, job matching, apprenticeship opportunities and SkillBridge with a focus on how DVOPs, LVERs and CODLs can use these tools to enhance day-to-day work with veterans.

Speakers: **Kim Lott***, Community & State Outreach Administrator, DirectEmployers

Ellen Samoriski, NLx Coordinator, NASWA

BREAKOUT 4 – SERVING VETERANS IN MINIMUM-SECURITY CORRECTIONAL PROGRAMS | INDEPENDENCE BALLROOM

This session highlights best practices used by JVSG staff working with incarcerated veterans in a minimum-security prison program. Through early engagement, structured employment-readiness workshops, and coordinated resource referrals, veterans gain critical knowledge before release. The program emphasizes résumé development, interview preparation, workforce system registration, available support services, and warm handoffs to local JVSG staff. Outcomes demonstrate improved employment readiness, increased awareness of veteran resources, reduced recidivism, and stronger continuity of services supporting successful community reentry.

Moderator: **Dr. Katie Baillio***, Rural Veterans Career Advisor, Texas Veterans Commission

Speakers: **Scott Graves***, West District Outreach Coordinator, Texas Veterans Commission

Edgar Ortega*, Veterans Career Advisor, Texas Veterans Commission

Eliseo Torrez*, Veterans Career Advisor, Texas Veterans Commission

Hector Verdin*, Rural Veterans Career Advisor, Texas Veterans Commission

9:30a – 10:00a

NETWORKING BREAK

Independence Foyer

10:00a – 11:00a **PLENARY SESSION**

Independence Ballroom

HOME IS WHERE THE CAREER IS

Following military service, many Veterans either go back home, stay near their last duty station, or go to a new location where the job is. Panelists will share innovative ideas, programs and state initiatives to connect Veterans and their families to opportunities in their states.

Moderator: **Sarah Morrissey**, Director Employment Service Bureau/Operations, New Hampshire Employment Security

Speakers: **Alex Conley**, Director, Find Your Ohio, JobsOhio's National Talent Attraction Program

Ronnie Marquez-Posey*, Bureau Chief, Specialized Workforce Services, Ohio Department of Job & Family Services

Jamie Norton*, Director of Veteran Workforce Services, Iowa Workforce Development

Alex Sellner*, Chief of Veteran Services, Virginia Works

11:00a – 12:00p **CLOSING PLENARY SESSION**

Independence Ballroom

THE WORKFORCE PIPELINE PLAYBOOK: WHAT LARGE EMPLOYERS WISH STATES KNEW

Everyone talks about the talent shortage. Few speak honestly about why workforce pipelines break down between states, employers, and job seekers — especially for veterans and military spouses. In this candid session, Boeing's leader for Veteran and Military Spouse Programs pulls back the curtain, shares the "secret sauce" and provides practical lessons on what works and what doesn't. While the challenges we face are daunting and real, it doesn't have to be boring! Robin is an internationally touring comedian, so you won't fall asleep and you will laugh.

Robin Johnson*, Senior Manager, Military Connected & Veteran Program, Boeing

FINAL THOUGHTS AND CLOSING

Anna Hunter*, Assistant Director, Arizona Department of Economic Security, and NASWA Veterans Affairs Committee Chair

CONFERENCE ADJOURNS – SAFE TRAVELS EVERYONE!

See you next year! Mark your calendars for August 11-13, 2027, at the Grand Hyatt in Washington, DC.