AWWA Webinar Program: Veterans: An Untapped Resource for the Water Sector
Wednesday, May 27, 2015

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Chad Weikel
Education & Workforce Manager
American Water Works Association

Mr. Weikel is currently the Education and Workforce Manager at the American Water Works Association. He is tasked with enhancing the educational outcomes of AWWA Conferences, Webinars, and eLearning programs. He has also served as staff liaison for the Small Systems Division and Workforce Strategies Committee. He is an experienced instructional designer, specializing in adult learning with blended delivery. Before AWWA, Mr. Weikel designed and delivered programs of instruction for national audiences such as the National Guard Family Program, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, and the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency. Mr. Weikel holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Health and Exercise Science from Colorado State University, and a Master of Arts degree in Education, Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Phoenix.

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Panel of Experts

Katie McCain
Chair, Veterans’ Workforce Initiative for American Water Works Association

Angela Wilcher
National Employment Coordinator
Department of Veterans Affairs

Cynthia Rosas
Program Specialist/Veterans Education
Texas Veterans Commission

Lt. Col. Robert Hensley
Director, Central US Region Soldier for Life
US Army, Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army

Agenda

I. Why Do We Need Veterans? Katie McCain

II. Hiring Veterans Angela Wilcher

III. On-the-Job (OJT)/Apprenticeship Training Benefits Overview Cynthia Rosas

IV. Soldier for Life Overview Lt. Col. Robert Hensley
Goal for Webinar

- You will be able to connect with qualified candidates for your open and soon to be open positions
- You will learn about the various programs for Veterans and employers
- You will be able to access Veterans using those programs

Ask the Experts

Katie McCain  Angela Wilcher  Cynthia Rosas  Lt. Col. Robert Hensley

Enter your question into the question pane at the lower right hand side of the screen.
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Why Do We Need Veterans?

Katie McCain
Chair, Veterans’ Workforce Initiative
American Water Works Association

Agenda

• Water Sector workforce crisis
• Why Veterans are a good fit for us
• What we are doing
• Challenge to Service Providers
Our Workforce Crisis

• Water utilities will lose 30-50% of their workforces in the next 10-15 years
• The crisis was delayed because of the economy
• Impact greatest in Engineering and Operations

Our Workforce Crisis (cont.)

• Water sector employees are often long-time employees
• A lot of knowledge and experience will be walking out the door
• We need to replace those experienced employees with other experienced employees
Why Veterans?

• Accelerated Learning Curve
• Leadership
• Teamwork
• Diversity and Inclusion in action
• Efficient performance under pressure

Why Veterans?

• Respect for procedures
• Technology and globalization
• Integrity
• Triumph over adversity
• Service to a Mission
• Veterans are in EVERY community
What We Are Doing

- Articles in publications, on websites
- Work for Water website (www.workforwater.org)
- Presentations at conferences
- Booths at conferences
- Webinars

What We Are Doing (cont.)

- Establishing relationships with organizations serving Veterans and Service members
- Job Fairs
- Challenge to Service Providers
Challenge to Service Providers

- Hire one Veteran between ACE 15 and ACE 16
- Any Veteran counts
- Hires must be reported
- Recognition at ACE 16
  - Flags at booths
  - Video screens at Water Industry Luncheon

Summary

- We need Veterans to help decrease the impact of the workforce crisis
- Veterans are a good fit for the water sector
- We have a number of programs
Contact Information

• Please contact me if you need help getting started on your search for Veterans and Service Members
• Katie McCain, Chair, AWWA Veterans’ Workforce Initiative
  – kathryn.mccain2@gmail.com
  – 214.707.8120

Ask the Experts

Katie McCain  Angela Wilcher  Cynthia Rosas  Lt. Col. Robert Hensley

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Hiring Veterans

Angela Wilcher
National Employment Coordinator
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Agenda

- Why Hire a Veteran
- VR&E Program Overview
- Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Programs
- On the Job Training Program
- Non-Paid Work Experience
- Special Employer Incentive Program
- The Vet Center (VEC)
- Understanding Veterans Skills and Qualifications
- Where to find Veterans?
- eBenefits.va.gov Website
- Employing Veterans with Disabilities
Introduction: WHY Hire A Veteran

The United States invests billions of dollars every year to train, educate and develop the men and women who serve in our Nation’s military. This investment shows in the exceptional quality, reliability, and performance that symbolize our Nation’s Service Members and Veterans.

Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Programs

VR&E programs strive to increase economic and career opportunities by ensuring Veterans experience strong economic outcomes and increased career mobility through specialized employment programs including:

- On-the-job Training (OJT) or Apprentice
- Non-paid Work Experience (NPWE)
- Special Employer Incentive (SEI)
- Supported Employment
On Job Training (OJT) and Apprentice Programs

What is an OJT?

- Offers employers the opportunity to hire qualified Veterans for which a certain period is designated as training
- Veteran is hired at the apprenticeship wage
- VR&E supplements Veteran’s salary up to the journeyman wage
- VR&E purchases necessary tools, uniforms, and supplies
- VR&E evaluates need for on-site accommodations
  www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/docs/factsheets/OJT_Factsheet.

Non-Paid Work Experience Program

What is Non-Paid Work Experience?

- Training and practical job experience working in a Federal, State, or Local government agency
- Veteran receives a subsistence allowance from the VA
- Does not count against agency’s full-time employees
- No “red tape” to hire or fire; Minimal paperwork
- Highly-qualified temporary employee at NO COST to the employer

To learn more see: www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/emp_resources.htm
Special Employer Incentives (SEI)

Six month program
Employer uses SEI to hire the Veteran to:
  • Compensate for loss of production or other costs
  • Compensate for additional supply and equipment costs
  • Qualify for reimbursement of up to 50% of the Veteran’s salary during the SEI program, to cover the aforementioned costs of training the Veteran

VR&E Representative will meet with employer to discuss the initial cost needed to train the Veteran
  • VR&E Representative assists with required paperwork
  • Employee is trained by employer’s standards

To learn more visit: www.benefits.va.gov/vow/foremployers.htm

The Veterans Employment Center (VEC) – eBenefits.va.gov

The Veteran Employment Center is a web resource to provide employers with direct access to a current data base of Veteran resume profiles
  • Employers Can Post jobs in the Veterans Job Bank
  • Search Verified Job Seeker Profiles
  • Make an Employer Commitment
  • Find Other Resources

To establish an account on the Employment Center, visit www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/jobs
Understanding Veterans Skills and Qualifications

**Veteran Employment Center (VEC)** - The VEC translates military skills, experience, and training into civilian careers [https://employmentportal.herokuapp.com/employer_tools](https://employmentportal.herokuapp.com/employer_tools)

**(O*NET OnLine)** - The O*NET program is the nation’s primary source of occupational information. The database, which is available to the public at no cost, contains information on hundreds of standardized and occupation-specific descriptors, and is continually updated by surveying a broad range of workers from each occupation. [https://www.onetonline.org/](https://www.onetonline.org/)


Where to Find Veterans?

When employers hire Veterans from VR&E they benefit from access to more than 56 offices, 1200 Vocational Rehabilitations Counselors, and 80 Employment Coordinators. The VR&E program has more than 120,000 participants preparing and/or ready for hire.

- Register on [eBenefits.va.gov](https://www.ebenefits.va.gov)
- **“FIND A VA VR&E Employment Coordinator”**
  VA has Employment Coordinators (EC) located throughout the country that can help you find qualified Veterans to fill your vacancies. You can click on the link **“National Employment Coordinators List”** visit the eBenefits.va.gov website to find the Employment Coordinator in your area.
Employing Veterans with Disabilities

Employing Veterans with disabilities is not different than employing anyone with or without a disability. Veterans in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program will be screened to make sure they are suitable for employment before job referrals are made.
Questions

Angela Wilcher
National Employment Coordinator
Angela.wilcher@va.gov
202-461-9600

Ask the Experts

Katie McCain  Angela Wilcher  Cynthia Rosas  Lt. Col. Robert Hensley

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On-the-Job (OJT)/Apprenticeship Training Benefits Overview

Cynthia Rosas
Program Specialist/Veterans Education
Texas Veterans Commission

Rationale

• Veterans may need some training for the jobs they are seeking

• There are GI Bill related benefits for Veterans in certain types of training programs
Learning Objectives

• You will know how to work with your State Approving Agency
• You will learn how to develop a training program for OJT’s or Apprenticeships.
• You will learn how help a Veteran earn GI Bill benefits while in training

Agenda

• State Approving Agencies
• Apprenticeship Programs
• On-The-Job Training Program
• Benefits
Agenda (cont.)

• Example of an Apprenticeship Program
• Issues encountered
• Verification of Military Experience/Training
• Contacts

State Approving Agencies

• What are State Approving Agencies?
• Mission of State Approving Agencies
• Primary responsibility and focus of SAAs
• Role of SAAs
OJT or Apprenticeship Programs

- Can provide GI Bill benefits
- Offer an alternative to college or vocational schools
- Veterans must not already be qualified for the job or occupation
- In addition to their wages, they receive a monthly training benefit
- Facility listed on state’s database of facilities that offer OJT/Apprenticeship training.

Apprenticeship Program

- Is a structured system of training
- Designed to prepare individuals for occupation in skilled trades or crafts
- Combines OJT training with related classroom instruction
- Goal is to obtain Journeyman rating
- Usually last from 2 to 8 years
On-The-Job Training

- Lasts from 6 months to 24 months
- Must be a full-time employee of the company/facility
- Work under supervision of a skilled worker
- Usually no related classroom training
- Must receive at least one wage increase by the end of training period
- Draw a monthly educational benefit

Benefits

- Rates are paid out monthly in the arrears
- Based on length of time in program
- GI Bill benefits decrease as wages increase
- Cannot receive benefits from two programs at the same time
- Usually for 36 months maximum
Issues Encountered

• OJT or Apprenticeship?
• Need details for training outlines
• Competency skills helpful
• Include information on licensing
• Designated Certifying Individual critical
Summary

- State Approving Agencies can approve benefits for Veterans
- OJT and Apprenticeship programs can give Veterans training they need
- SAA can help design program
- Reminder that no compensation is made to company/facility
- Contact your state’s SAA

Military Training/Experience

- Employers can ask Veterans to request transcripts from:
  - Register to Use this System
  - If you are prior Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, or Navy or do not have access to a Common Access Card (CAC) reader, then [REGISTER](https://jst.doded.mil/smart/signIn.do) for a JST account.
  - Who's Eligible For JST Transcripts
  - Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy: Active Duty, Reserve and Veterans.
  - [How to make updates or corrections to your JST Transcript](https://jst.doded.mil/smart/signIn.do)
  - [How to request an official transcript](https://jst.doded.mil/smart/signIn.do)
  - [Frequently Asked Questions](https://jst.doded.mil/smart/signIn.do)
  - [Academic Institutions](https://jst.doded.mil/smart/signIn.do)

- [https://jst.doded.mil/smart/signIn.do](https://jst.doded.mil/smart/signIn.do)
Contact Information

VA Educational Toll-Free Line 1-888-442-4551
(Monday-Friday, 0730-1630)
http://www.gibill.va.gov

Texas Veterans Commission 1-877-898-3833
(Monday-Friday, 0800-1700)
http://www.tvc.texas.gov/

Cynthia.Rosas@tvc.texas.gov (512) 463-8128

Ask the Experts

Katie McCain  Angela Wilcher  Cynthia Rosas  Lt. Col. Robert Hensley

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Soldier for Life Overview

LTC Robert B. Hensley
Director, Central US Region
Soldier for Life

Rationale

• Sustain the water industry workforce

• Transitioning Service Members and Veterans are an untapped talent pool

• Veteran’s bring a set of values and wide range of skills sets and experiences that fit in the water industry
Learning Objectives

• Understand the SFL Program, Initiatives, and the value of hiring Veterans

• Acquire methods to connect with Veterans

• Improve recruiting, hiring, and retaining Veteran employees

Agenda

• SFL Framework

• Career Skills Programs

• Connect to Veterans
  ➢ Veteran Employment Center
  ➢ Employer Tool Kit
  ➢ Hiring Fairs/Transition Summit

• Recruit, Hire, Retain
  ➢ Landing Pages/Affinity Groups
  ➢ Hiring Considerations
  ➢ Interview Considerations
**Soldier For Life Program**

**Mission:** Soldier for Life connects Army, governmental, and community efforts to build relationships that facilitate successful reintegration of our Soldiers, Retired Soldiers, Veterans, and their Families in order to keep them Army Strong and instill their values, ethos, and leadership within communities.

*End state is to be “Career Ready”*

**Army Imperative: Sustain the Premier All-Volunteer Army**

**Career Skills Programs**

- Partnerships with private industry and labor unions to train transitioning Soldiers for immediate high-skill job placement

- Apprenticeships, Internships, On the Job Training

- Authorizes Soldiers within 180 days of separation to participate

- Transitioning Soldier’s place of duty
Veteran Employment Center

- Searchable database
- Connect directly to veterans
- Company jobs posted at top of search returns when tagged “VET Friendly”
- No manual posting; pulls from NLX and company employment page
- Veterans from all era and all definitions

Hiring Our Heroes Foundation

- Some numbers:
  - 369,000 confirmed hires through Hiring 585,000 Heroes Commitment
  - 780 Hiring Summits resulting in 26,000 hires since 2011 (~70-80 Summits each year beginning 2015)

- Resources for:
  - Transitioning Service Member and Spouse
  - State/Local Government
  - Employers

- Employer Roadmap
  - Customizable: Company Size & Veteran Hiring Experience
  - Tools (Articles, Case Studies, Action Plans)
  - Phased Approach (Prepare, Recruit, Empower)
Interagency - Transition Summits

Empowering the Military Community

Enhancing Veteran and Military Spouse Competitiveness

Educate businesses on best practices

**Day One – Employer Focus**
- Interactive Panels & Forums
  - National Perspective
  - Local Perspective
  - Best Practices in Hiring
- Networking reception

**Day Two – Service Member Focus**
- Town Hall-Style Panels
- Employment Workshops
  - Comprehensive Presentations
  - One-on-One Resume Review
- Hiring our Heroes Job Fair

**Corporate Information Sessions**

- Corporate Information Sessions
  - Access to transitioning Soldiers
  - Inform about employment opportunities within organization

- Requirements
  - Vetting process (transparent to the company)
  - Dedicated to hire Vets with positions ready for hire

- Benefits
  - Provides our transitions Soldiers more career info
  - Employer access to transitioning Soldiers on a consistent and regular basis
Veteran Landing Page/Affinity Group

1. Highlight Values & Mission
2. Veteran Connection to HR
3. Connect candidates to support staff
4. Community Outreach

What the group does:
- Improving the opportunities for Veterans...
- Educating leaders about the value they (Veterans) bring the company
- Mentoring & Transition support

Considerations

**Hiring Considerations**
- Top 29% of Americans (18-24), drug free, HS diploma with the highest moral, ethical, and health standards
- Sound decision makers in uncertain and dynamic environments
- Ability to solve complex problems with minimal guidance and resources
- Provides confident and competent leadership in tough, stressful situations
- Leadership experience, confident leading peers and subordinates

**Interview Considerations**
- Vast majority have never interviewed for a job
- Soldiers are not conditioned to talk about themselves – very team oriented
- Preparation for civilian interviews is improving, but many Soldiers are unaware of their true potential
- Probing / leading questions help them open up
- Retain idiosyncrasies of military culture
  - Respect for position
  - Military terminology
  - Team player
Summary

● Use the Soldier For Life program as a resource

● Connect with Veterans through the VEC, hiring fairs/summits, and corporate information sessions

● Improve your Veteran recruiting, hiring, and retaining efforts with quality landing pages and affinity groups

● Consider the unique skills sets, values, and experience that Veterans possess when considering hiring actions

Resources

• Soldier for Life - www.soldierforlife.army.mil/

• Veterans Employment Center -
  https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/employers
  Technical Assistance: oeoecsupport.vbavaco@va.gov

• Hiring Our Heroes (HoH) –
  http://www.uschamberfoundation.org/hiring-our-heroes
  Roadmap: http://www.employerroadmap.org
Ask the Experts

Enter your question into the question pane at the lower right hand side of the screen.
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Final Words

• Thank you to all of our speakers & AWWA staff
• Encourage everyone to take advantage of these programs
• Please share your stories
• Call me if you need help!
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• Until next time, keep the water safe and secure.

Presenter Biography Information

Ms. McCain has been involved with workforce development since 2006. Since 2009, she has been active in connecting Veterans with opportunities in the water sector. This effort is focused on educating water sector professionals about the benefits of hiring Veterans as well as the process to identify qualified candidates. She is also working with various governmental agencies that assist Veterans, as well as the military itself, to build awareness of rewarding water sector careers.

Ms. Wilcher’s job as National Employment Coordinator in the VA Central Office has given the water sector direct access to nationwide resources for Veterans. She has attended ACE for the past three years and has an in-depth understanding of water-sector needs. She has also been working with VA staff to connect them to water sector opportunities.

Cynthia L. Rosas received her Bachelor of Science from the University of Houston, and the Master of Education from Grand Canyon University. Ms. Rosas has been employed with the Texas Veterans Commission as a Program Specialist since 2007. Prior to that Cynthia worked as a Certifying Official/Financial Aid Advisor at San Jacinto College, Pasadena, TX for 15 years, and prior to that, in the Registrar’s office at the University of Houston for six years. Cynthia is happily married and a proud mother to 2 children.

LTC Hensley focuses on connecting Veterans with employment opportunities. He recently started working with AWWA to connect Service Members to opportunities in the water sector. He has assisted in connecting AWWA to Army installations, transition centers, and key stakeholders and is exploring possible career skills programs. The increasing transitioning Veteran population and the employment/training opportunities of the Water Industry make this a very promising relationship.
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