INTEGRATING AND ENGAGING VETERANS IN THE WORKFORCE

Integrating and Engaging Veterans in the Workforce
National Convening

January 31 and February 1, 2017
Alexandria, Virginia

HOSTED BY

SPONSORED BY

The SHRM Foundation champions workforce and workplace transformation and inspires HR professionals to make it happen. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit affiliate of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the SHRM Foundation provides HR professionals with scholarships, opportunities, solutions and resources to create change in their organizations and their communities. The SHRM Foundation works to empower HR professionals to build inclusive organizations where all employees thrive and organizations achieve success. Online at shrmfoundation.org.

The National Association of Veteran-Serving Organizations (NAVSO) is an IRS-approved nonprofit organization focused on improving the lives of veterans and military families. NAVSO accomplishes this vision by providing essential resources to those who serve them. NAVSO commissions research, delivers educational programming, offers direct consultation, uses technology to join together veteran-serving organizations to improve collaboration and facilitates the evaluation of meaningful services. For more information about NAVSO, please visit: www.navso.org

USAA is focused on serving the unique financial needs of the military community; it's in our DNA. We understand military life and seek to know our members so we can share the best advice, products and services possible. Like family, we are passionately committed to being there for our members in every stage of life. We give back to our communities and advocate for needs of the military community. We know what it means to serve. Learn more: www.usaa.com

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Thank you

Friends,

On behalf of the Society for Human Resource Management Foundation and the National Association of Veteran-Serving Organizations, thank you to everyone who joined us for our national summit to discuss employing, engaging and retaining veterans in the workforce.

Through the collaboration of all the entities that joined us for the summit, we look to measurably improve the lives of our nation's veterans. This event was the beginning of a multi-year SHRM Foundation initiative to leverage SHRM's network of more than 250,000 HR professionals to disseminate resources and create local impact supporting veterans. Outputs from this summit will be used to generate needed research and solutions to support organizations in the important work of integrating and engaging veterans.

We are fully committed to this important initiative and we hope you will continue on this journey with us as we leverage the work that was accomplished during this summit towards reaching longer-term goals. On behalf of those who served our nation and now seek meaningful careers back in our communities, thank you so much for your participation.

Sincerely,

Beth M. McFarland, CAE
Acting Executive Director
SHRM Foundation

Chris Ford, USAF (Ret.)
Founder and CEO
NAVSO

Executive Summary

On February 1, 2017, the SHRM Foundation and NAVSO assembled nearly 60 thought leaders and stakeholders representing a diverse set of public and private perspectives relating to veteran employment with one goal in mind: improve veteran employee integration and engagement in the workforce. To accelerate the goals of a broader project, this group gathered to ensure veteran employees succeed by identifying existing challenges and leading solutions in veteran employment.

Participants were tasked to:
- Identify successful research-based practices currently in use.
- Identify ways that local SHRM chapters and state councils can make an impact on the employment and retention of veterans in the workplace.
- Bolster business case arguments for investing in the hiring of veterans.
- Determine which existing veteran hiring and retention programs need research to validate their effectiveness and what related issues still need evidence-based solutions.

Guided by professional design facilitators, participants worked in three groups to share their insights into existing challenges and potential solutions. By the end of the day, each group initiated a robust list a research questions; developed and analyzed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; prioritized actions to improve hiring and retention of veteran employees, and; uncovered valuable insights into the business case for hiring veterans.

The synthesis of these group efforts resulted in the following top-level findings:

1. **The most pressing need is to educate both employers and service members in the areas of cultural competency, acumen and the transition process.** HR professionals and businesses need to understand military culture and the military perspective. Likewise, transitioning service members must develop a corporate cultural competency, business acumen and a business perspective, so the two sides can effectively communicate, translate job skills and assimilate culturally.

2. **The challenges in veteran employment are very broad.** They span the entire lifecycle from talent identification, recruitment and hiring, onboarding and integrating, all the way through engagement and retention. Transition is a complex process, not a single event, which means that a comprehensive solution set is required. There are no game-changing

programs or silver bullets that can single-handedly solve this complex problem. HR professionals and businesses are encouraged to embrace this challenge because most evidence shows that a fully engaged veteran will produce an extraordinary ROI for the organization.

3. **Most programs to help veterans transition to the civilian workforce do not actively connect job-seeking veterans with employers.** Thus, businesses, HR professionals and service members must actively search for and tap into these transition programs. More effective and robust platforms and initiatives are needed to communicate the existence of such programs and channel veterans and employers into an appropriate pairing. Most important of all, cultural competency training, job skill translation, veteran initiative toolkits, and transitioning education programs for service members and business professionals alike are greatly needed.

4. **Veterans need more realistic expectations of the civilian workplace.** To better manage their expectations, veterans must learn the honest truth about the nature of relationships, behaviors, business values, compensation and career paths in the civilian workplace. Veterans often experience extreme stress and frustration when attempting to transition without adequate preparation.

5. **Veterans should adopt a set of core values in alignment with the business world.** Doing so helps them to culturally assimilate, find meaning in the organization's mission and become an essential part of the business. Both sides have to learn not to speak past each other when discussing values that are common in name but hold different meanings in the military and business communities. For example, commitment is a common value but the paradigms of what is committed to are not the same (e.g. excellence and customer satisfaction versus mission and duty). Though it may take some time for veterans to adapt to some business values such as innovation and customer satisfaction, they will find a better fit within the organization when their values align.

6. **Integrating and engaging veterans in the workforce can add substantial value to an organization.** Benefits include improved performance and productivity that will directly affect the bottom line, a more flexible and strategically focused workforce, and increased diversity. Limitations that may challenge an endeavor include clashes of culture, lack of resources, translating the veteran's skills and experiences to meet the needs of the business, and alignment with the business plan.

7. Several actions have been identified that the SHRM Foundation can champion to support this undertaking, including but not limited to:

- Establishing and promoting cultural competency and acumen education and training programs for both veterans and businesses;
- Creating a global knowledge and resources community of practice; encourage participation and the exchange of ideas, best practices, and successes;
- Creating veteran transition training and program starter toolkits with process maps & career pathing for small businesses, HR professionals, and others;
- Translating military skills and experiences into workforce applications;
- Assisting and encouraging small businesses to find and employ veterans in their workforce;
- Creating a national definition of "success" as it applies to a veteran transitioning into the workforce; and
- Serving as the conduit for messaging on behalf of transitioning veterans in the workforce, including calls for research and access to existing programs.

As a result of the day's work and our subsequent analysis, the SHRM Foundation will partner with veteran-serving organizations to create a suite of resources and tools, specifically targeted to HR professionals, to assist employers in finding, hiring, engaging and retaining veterans in their organizations. In addition, we are developing a roadmap to help SHRM members and chapters create local impact in their own communities.

Products including the following will be released in late 2017 and early 2018 and distributed free of charge to SHRM's network of 285,000 members and 575 local chapters:

• A robust business case and companion PowerPoint presentation on the value of hiring veterans.
• A series of case studies explaining how other organizations have overcome common challenges such as sourcing good veteran talent.
• A comprehensive guidebook sharing the best research-based practices on hiring and retaining veterans.
• A local-impact brochure with a list of recommended service projects, partners and other opportunities to support veteran employment in the community.
• An online list of free resources and recommended veterans' organizations to support employers.

In addition, the SHRM Foundation is exploring potential research opportunities to help develop better outcome measures for veteran transitions.

Focus, Goals and Participants

Overall Project Theme

Leveraging SHRM networks and resources to integrate and engage veterans in the workplace.

Overall Project Objective

Facilitate local action and organizational change using evidence-based practices to integrate and engage veterans in the workplace.

The Day's Goals

The summit was designed to serve as a catalyst for the complicated work ahead. Given the limited time together, the organizers recognized there was only so much that could be accomplished in one day with an audience of less than 60 people. However, the participants assembled to discover and uncover as much relevant information relating to the project's overall theme and objective as possible. As one step in a longer term, co-created effort, the goals for the day were:

- Identify successful research-based practices currently in use.
- Identify ways that local SHRM chapters and state councils can make an impact on the employment and retention of veterans in the workplace.
- Bolster business case arguments for investing in the hiring of veterans.
- Determine which existing veteran hiring and retention programs need research to validate their effectiveness and what related issues still need evidence-based solutions.

Participants

Nearly 60 participants representing a broad cross-section of the veteran advocacy, research and employer communities gathered from across the country to consider the gaps, barriers, capacity and capabilities needed to improve outcomes for veterans seeking meaningful careers.

The following participating companies, organizations and agencies were in attendance:

Amazon	Apple	Bank of America
Bob Woodruff Foundation	Bush Institute	Call of Duty Endowment
CASY-MSCCN	CNAS	Comcast NBCUniversal

| Deloitte | Department of Labor | Department of Defense |
Department of Veterans Affairs	First Data	Hire Heroes USA
Intelligent Compensation, LLC	Monster	Northrop Grumman
Powell Strategies	Prudential	RAND
Robert McCormick Foundation	Sage Foundation	Sodexo
Student Veterans of America	Syracuse University	Uber
USAA	U.S. Coast Guard	Verizon
Veterati	We Are The Mighty	

Methodology

The Day's Format

Convening attendees were assigned to three work groups comprised of a diverse group of professionals with backgrounds in nonprofit services, human resources, research, government services, policy and philanthropy. Most of the day was devoted to three work sessions led by facilitators charged to help groups move conversations towards the day's goals.

Each work group was comprised of 12 to 16 participants plus one or more facilitator. Work groups were purposely created to ensure an adequate dispersion of employers, government policy experts, service providers, funders, etc.

Work session 1 focused on identifying research questions and building the business case for hiring veterans. Work session 2 focused on leveraging SHRM members and chapters to help business leaders. Lastly, work session 3 focused on identifying existing solutions that might help with known, pervasive employment challenges.

Facilitators used a variety of adult-learning methods designed to promote an equal voice for all participants. Multiple facilitation and dialogue techniques were employed to allow participants to collectively gather information, share ideas, generate

knowledge and make sense of the problem. Individual and collaborative input was provided via brainstorming, affinity diagraming, dot voting, and interactive Socratic dialogue exercises.

All relevant and expressed ideas were captured. By the end of the one-day event, participants had contributed more than 1,800 inputs related to meeting the overall objectives and goals.
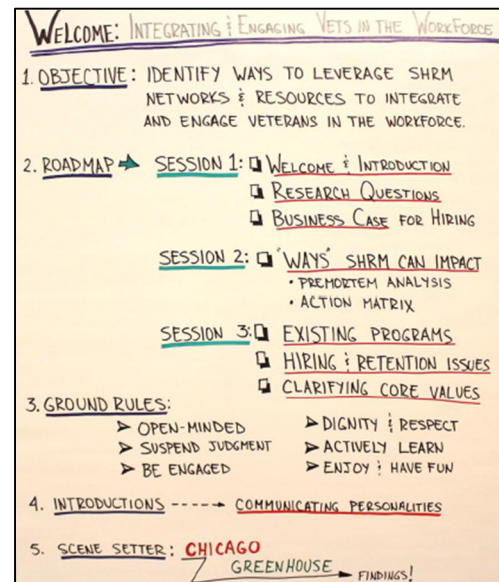
Work Session 1

Focus: Advantage and challenges in hiring veterans were explored with the goal of improving the business case for hiring veterans and identifying areas requiring additional research. Key stakeholders and their respective issues and requirements for project buy-in were also explored.

Initial elements considered during this work session:

- Why hire a vet
- Making a business case for hiring a vet
- Cultural considerations
- Knowledge and skills that businesses need
- Translating skills that vets bring to the business
- Business biases and stereotypes about vets
- Hidden skills gap
- What information and knowledge needed that we don't have about this problem
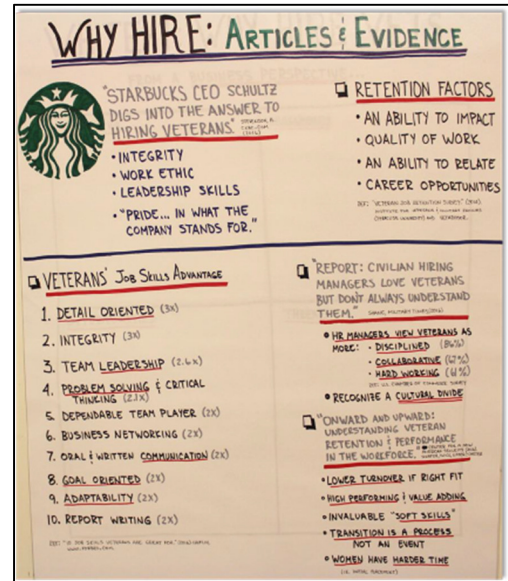
Work Session 2

Focus: Identifying the key issues and ways the SHRM Foundation and HR professionals can help integrate and engage veterans in the workforce. Participants developed, evaluated, and recommended a prioritized set of actions to take. Deliverables from this session included an action matrix and pre-mortem analysis.

Initial elements considered during this work session:

- Cultural acclimatization
- Models for integration
- SHRM competencies and expertise
- Retention of the vet once hired
- Transition models
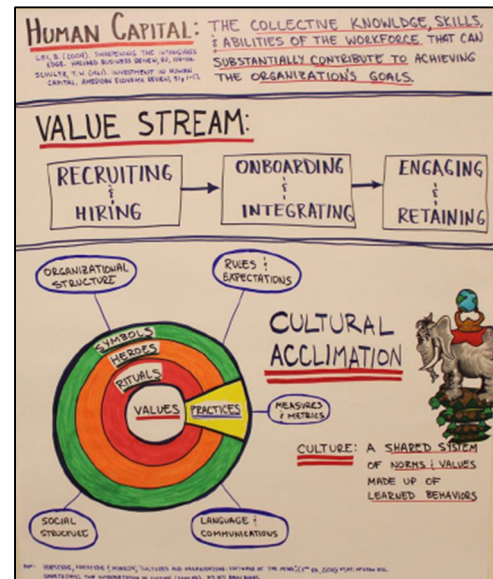
Work Session 3

Focus: A roundtable inquiry and discussion of existing programs relevant to this undertaking. Participants then identified and discussed critical hiring and retention issues that require evidence-based solutions. The final element of this session was designed to identify the core values that veterans will need to adapt to when they transition to the business world.

Elements considered during this work session:

- Military core values

- Existing programs that work

- What provides meaning to the vet

- How do we measure success?

Analysis

The human-design exercise was predominantly a qualitative analysis driven by literature review, individual experiences, and group discussions of how to best integrate and engage veterans into the non-military workforce.

Data from all the teams were consolidated by session into raw data sheets and the raw data from each session was coded using qualitative analysis techniques. Categories and themes that emerged from the analysis were quantified and graphed to the extent possible when deemed analytically sound.

A qualitative analysis with limited quantification was used because of the behavioral science nature of the exercise coupled with the quantifiable limitations associated with the data.

The ideas developed from the convening are captured in this report but will be further analyzed and refined into a final report aimed to build an eventual framework for the work ahead. Shared with participants and the broader audience of stakeholders and advocates, this framework will leverage post-event working groups to reach the project's long-term objective over the course of many months.

Core Values

Each work group was asked to examine military core values as they relate to core values often found in businesses. In a summit focused on improving employment outcomes for veterans and businesses, identifying and understanding the core values in both communities was a key task helping inform the business case, identify research priorities and shape how the SHRM Foundation might influence outcomes.

Participants identified eight core values important to successful veteran-employer matching: integrity, initiative, professionalism, innovation, commitment, delivering results, diversity and courage. The following diagram shows how those values map more closely to the veteran, more closely to the business and equally between the veteran and the business.

Despite these variances, participants generally agreed that veteran and business values are compatible.
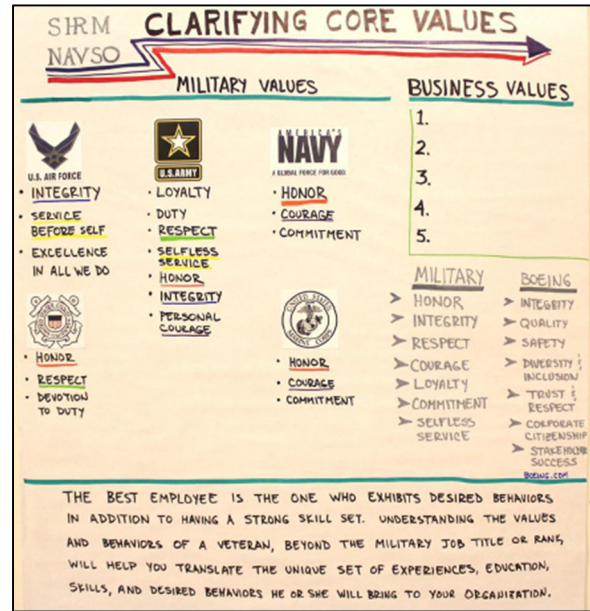
Core Values		
Veteran	**<- Common ->**	**Business**
Integrity	Professionalism	Innovation
Initiative	Diversity	Delivering Results
Courage	Commitment	

Table 1. Core Values

Generally speaking, military service is founded on courage, integrity and initiative. From the lowest ranking service member, to the highest-ranking leaders, these values are taught, exercised and reinforced continually. Deviations from these values are often quickly corrected and could even involve disciplinary action or discharge.

Conversely, the business community thrives on continual innovation and measurable (business) results. Unlike military service, which often (not always) downplays innovation at the individual level - trumping this with standard operating procedures or checklists – the business community encourages innovation and demands profitable results from its employees. It is the latter (profitable results which are the primary measure of risk) that is most foreign to veterans who measured risk during military service as mission accomplishment and/or the loss of life. These sharp contrasts make cultural assimilation in the business community very challenging for many veterans.

Thankfully, as participants noted, common values such as professionalism and diversity can serve as the bridge between the values veterans experienced in the military and the employer's business values. A more detailed depiction of participant observations concerning core values can be found in Table 2 below.

Core Military Values	Military Emphasis	Business Values	Common Ground	Mentions	Synthesized Results
Integrity			Integrity	3	Integrity * Ethics * Honesty * Respect
Courage				1	Courage
Commitment * Mission * Duty * Team		Commitment * Excellence * Quality * Customer Satisfaction	Commitment	2	Commitment * Excellence * Customer Satisfaction * Quality * Teamwork
		Innovation			Innovation
		Delivering Results			Delivering Results
	Professionalism		Professionalism	1	Professionalism
	Diversity		Diversity	1	Diversity
	Initiative		Initiative	1	Initiative
	Ethics		Ethics	1	
		Curiosity		1	
		Ownership		1	
Honesty			Honesty	1	
Respect			Respect	1	

Table 2. Core Value Matrix

SWOT Analysis

Each work group was asked to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to veteran employment. The following findings are in priority order and are also depicted in Table 3 and Charts 1-4.

Veteran Strengths

1. **Character:** leadership, initiative, loyalty, experience and maturity
2. **Business compatibility:** adaptable, agile, collaborative, entrepreneurial, resourceful and resilient
3. **Skilled talent:** well trained and trainable, hard and soft skills, diversity, health and fitness
4. **Outcome focused:** process, mission, and results oriented
5. **Core values:** desirable and compatible
6. **Global mindset:** cultural awareness, diversity and perspective

Veteran/Employer Weaknesses

1. **Cultural competence (both sides):** differences in core values, language, skills and culture; poor translation of skills; misunderstanding the job market; differences in the level of formality and structure; not understanding the value veterans can bring; employers lacking exposure to veterans leading to misaligned perceptions based only on sound bites or stereotypes
2. **Skills translations (both sides):** rigid alignment between military experience and new occupation (i.e., truck driver to truck driver); lack of commonly sought hard skills or certs and degrees; lack of exposure to veterans leading to misaligned perceptions based only on sound bites or stereotypes; HR process constraints
3. **Stereotyping (both sides):** "sound bite" narratives portraying veterans as: rigid, unable to adapt, non-collaborative, lacking creativity or initiative, lacking hard skills, full of entitlement, or unable to assimilate
4. **Improper placement:** misunderstanding the job market, unable to translate skills or credentials, poor military/business acumen, miscommunications, poor preparation, poor branding
5. **Expectation management (both sides):** poor preparation, rigidity, unrealistic, lack of structural clarity, workplace formality differences, misunderstanding business culture, assimilation challenges, inadequate communication and limited networking

Employer Opportunities in Veteran Employment

1. **Enhance productivity and performance:** veterans raise standards, and can help with cross-functional business integration; align and add beneficial military skills and principles; leverage ambition and drive; fill skills gaps; increased company loyalty; cultural catalyst

2. **Improve market strength and bottom line:** tax credit, strong ROI, favorably leverage military benefits, increased company value, add military skills and principles that will improve the bottom line, stable source of talent, improve branding

3. **Source of talent:** pipeline for top talent, early access to service members, fill skills gap, improve company loyalty, align military skills to corporate needs

4. **Improve branding:** brand enhancement, company and community loyalty, public awareness, civic engagement

5. **Diversified workforce:** add new knowledge and skills that are compatible with the business, add desirable military skills and knowledge

6. **Improve human capital management**: career pathing and advancement, certification programs, mentorship, pre-transition skills training

Threats to Veteran Employment Initiatives

1. **Veterans don't stick**: poor fit (skills/culture), skills gap, skills not translated, dysfunction, underemployment, unrealistic expectations, lack of productivity, hiring timelines, lack of job security, stereotyping, biases, misconceptions, stigma

2. **Initiative fails outright:** poor cultural fit, negative cultural shift occurs, instability, failure to launch, splitting resources between big initiatives, not championing, not fully understanding the initiative, lack of economic support, no "clearing house" for programs/resources, unrealistic expectations (both sides)

3. **Not championing the initiative:** costs, reluctant to pull focus from other big initiatives, failure to launch, stigma, unrealistic expectations, lack of productivity

4. **Misunderstand nuance and complexity:** different types of vets, legal limits of vet preference, stereotyping, biases, misconceptions, dysfunction, unrealistic expectations

5. **Economic/financial limits:** failure to launch, costs (vet initiatives, training, accommodation, acquiring and assimilating), guard/reserve issues, turnover, unrealistic expectations

	Strengths		Weaknesses		Opportunities		Threats
9	**Character**: leadership, initiative, loyalty, experience and maturity	12	**Cultural competence (both sides)**: differences in core values, language, skills and culture; poor translation of skills; misunderstanding the job market; differences in the level of formality and structure; not understanding the value veterans can bring; employers lacking exposure to veterans leading to misaligned perceptions based only on sound bites or stereotypes	7	**Enhance productivity and performance**: veterans raise standards, and can help with cross-functional business integration; align and add beneficial military skills and principles; leverage ambition and drive; fill skills gaps; increased company loyalty; cultural catalyst	13	**Veterans don't stick**: poor fit (skills/culture), skills gap, skills not translated, dysfunction, underemployment, unrealistic expectations, lack of productivity, hiring timelines, lack of job security, stereotyping, biases, misconceptions, stigma
8	**Business compatibility**: adaptable, agile, collaborative, entrepreneurial, resourceful and resilient	12	**Skills translations (both sides)**: rigid alignment between military experience and new occupation (i.e., truck driver to truck driver); lack of commonly sought hard skills or certs and degrees; lack of exposure to veterans leading to misaligned perceptions based only on sound bites or stereotypes; HR process constraints	7	**Improve market strength and bottom line**: tax credit, strong ROI, favorably leverage military benefits, increased company value, add military skills and principles that will improve the bottom line, stable source of talent, improve branding	12	**Initiative fails outright**: poor cultural fit, negative cultural shift occurs, instability, failure to launch, splitting resources between big initiatives, not championing, not fully understanding the initiative, lack of economic support, no "clearing house" for programs/resources, unrealistic expectations (both sides)
5	**Skilled talent**: well trained and trainable, hard and soft skills, diversity, health and fitness	10	**Stereotyping (both sides)**: "sound bite" narratives portraying veterans as: rigid, unable to adapt, non-collaborative, lacking creativity or initiative, lacking hard skills, full of entitlement, or unable to assimilate	7	**Source of talent**: pipeline for top talent, early access to service members, fill skills gap, improve company loyalty, align military skills to corporate needs	9	**Not championing the initiative**: costs, reluctant to pull focus from other big initiatives, failure to launch, stigma, unrealistic expectations, lack of productivity
4	**Outcome focused**: process, mission, and results oriented	9	**Improper placement**: misunderstanding the job market, unable to translate skills or credentials, poor military/business acumen, miscommunications, poor preparation, poor branding	7	**Improve branding**: brand enhancement, company and community loyalty, public awareness, civic engagement	7	**Misunderstand nuance and complexity**: different types of vets, legal limits of vet preference, stereotyping, biases, misconceptions, dysfunction, unrealistic expectations
3	**Core values**: desireable and compatible	8	**Expectation management (both sides)**: poor preparation, rigidity, unrealistic, lack of structural clarity, workplace formality differences, misunderstanding business culture, assimilation challenges, inadequate communication and limited networking	5	**Diversified workforce**: add new knowledge and skills that are compatible with the business, add desirable military skills and knowledge	7	**Economic/financial limits**: failure to launch, costs (vet initiatives, training, accommodation, acquiring and assimilating), guard/reserve issues, turnover, unrealistic expectations
3	**Global mindset**: cultural awareness, diversity & perspective			5	**Improve human capital management**: career pathing and advancement, certification programs, mentorship, pre-transition skills training		

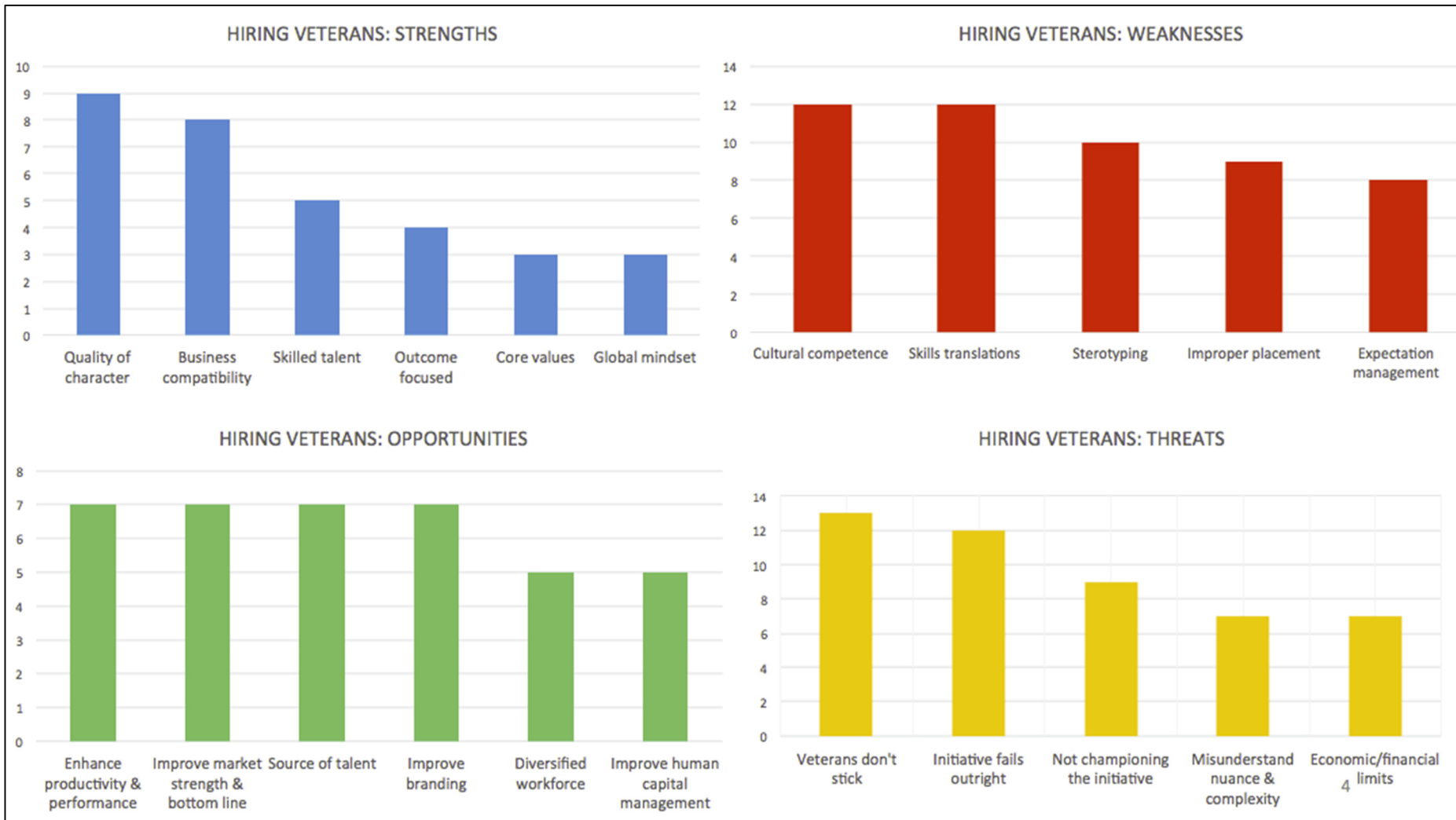*Table 3. SWOT Analysis*

HIRING VETERANS: STRENGTHS

Category	Value
Quality of character	9
Business compatibility	8
Skilled talent	5
Outcome focused	4
Core values	3
Global mindset	3

HIRING VETERANS: WEAKNESSES

Category	Value
Cultural competence	12
Skills translations	12
Sterotyping	10
Improper placement	9
Expectation management	8

HIRING VETERANS: OPPORTUNITIES

Category	Value
Enhance productivity & performance	7
Improve market strength & bottom line	7
Source of talent	7
Improve branding	7
Diversified workforce	5
Improve human capital management	5

HIRING VETERANS: THREATS

Category	Value
Veterans don't stick	13
Initiative fails outright	12
Not championing the initiative	9
Misunderstand nuance & complexity	7
Economic/financial limits	7

Charts 1-4. SWOT Analysis

The Business Case for Veteran Employment

Participants were asked to closely examine the business case for hiring veterans to meet business needs. Through several exercises, participants closely examined: a. the benefits of employing veterans, b. the limitations that inhibit successful veteran employment, c. the short-/long-term impacts, d. the interdependencies of certain variables and e. the business risks associated with veteran employment initiatives.

Benefits

Participants identified the following benefits for employing veterans (see Charts 5 and 6):
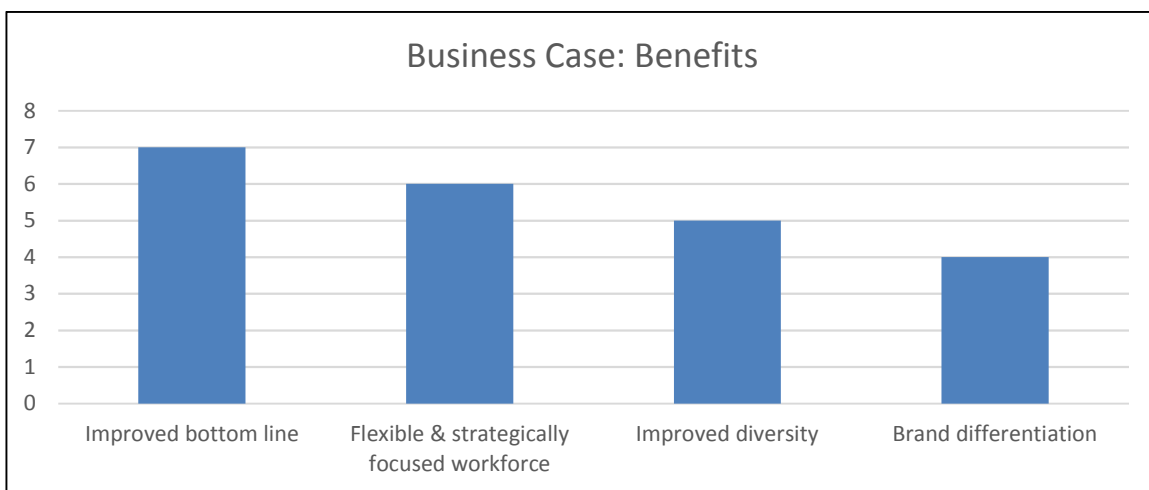
1. Improved bottom line
   a. Veteran skills add value and veterans make extraordinary contributions
   b. Veterans deliver on business objectives
   c. Veterans offer increased employee retention
   d. Hiring veterans has associated tax incentives
   e. Employing veterans increases access to, and competency in, government contracts
2. Flexible and strategically focused workforce
   a. Veterans are mature workers with strong work ethic
   b. Veterans bring experience and leadership capabilities
   c. Veterans are a viable talent pool
3. Improved workforce diversity
   a. Veterans bring diversity of thought and initiative to businesses
   b. Veterans have diver knowledge, skills and experiences
   c. Veterans represent broad demographics (women, minority, etc.)
4. Brand differentiation
   a. Veteran employment improves business brand recognition
   b. Veteran employment creates empathy
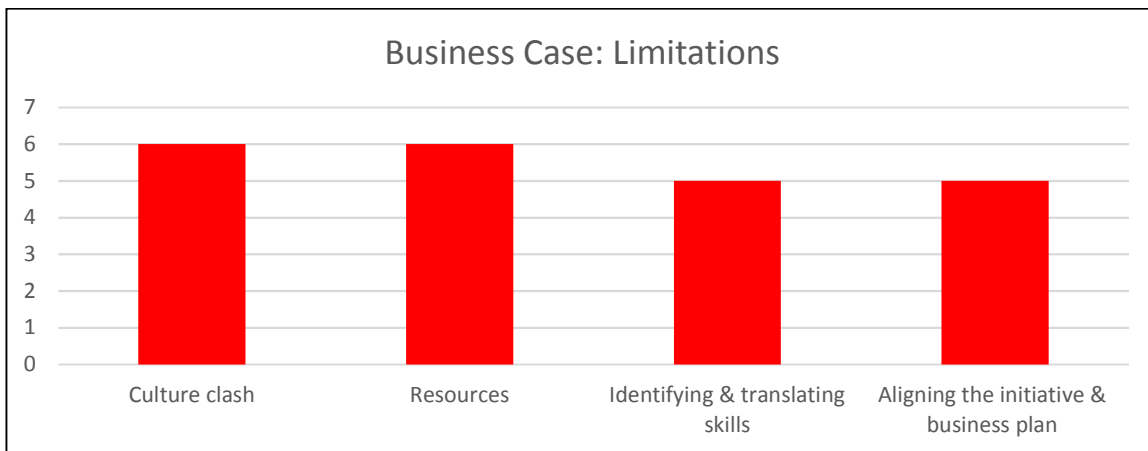   c. Veteran employment improves brand image

Limitations

Participants identified the following limitations that hinder veteran employment initiatives:

1. Culture Clash (both sides)
   a. Lack of cultural competency and awareness
   b. Challenges to onboard and assimilate new veteran employees

  c. Poor expectation management by both the veteran and the employer

  d. Overcoming embedded assumptions and biases is difficult

  e. Allocating proper internal support and attention to ensure success

2. Resources

  a. Timeline: often, the veteran's transition timeline does not match the employer's hiring timeline

  b. Budget: many businesses allocate insufficient funds to maximize veteran employment efforts

  c. Organizational capacity: many businesses, especially smaller businesses, lack capacity to dedicate resources to veteran employment programs

  d. Manpower: often, veteran-focused efforts are additional duties for employees that are already overworked

  e. Infrastructure: many businesses lack policies or programs to do veteran employment well

  f. Process ineffectiveness and inefficiency

3. Identifying and translating skills (both sides)

  a. Hidden or "soft" skills are difficult to quantify

  b. Bridging skills gaps

  c. Identifying qualified veteran candidates

  d. Understanding which veteran skills translate to business needs

4. Aligning the veteran initiative with business needs

  a. Often results in a supply/demand mismatch (i.e., location, skills, etc.)

  b. Initiative not properly incentivized

  c. Scale or scope not aligned with business need proportionally

Business Case: Benefits

Category	Value
Improved bottom line	7
Flexible & strategically focused workforce	6
Improved diversity	5
Brand differentiation	4

Chart 5: Benefits of Veteran Employment Initiatives

Chart 6: Limitations Inhibiting Successful Veteran Employment Initiatives

Potential Short-term and Long-term Impacts

As with any business initiative, starting a veteran employment program presents both opportunities and risks. Participants readily identified possible positive and negative impacts that could result from starting a veteran employment program. In general, groups mentioned the potential positive impacts over negative impacts nearly 3:1. Positive impacts included a stronger and more diverse workforce, general goodwill, improved bottom line and improved leadership/thinking. Potentially negative impacts included costs and time consumption, higher workforce turnover, adverse culture changes and stress on the existing organizational culture. Charts 7 and 8 depict these results.
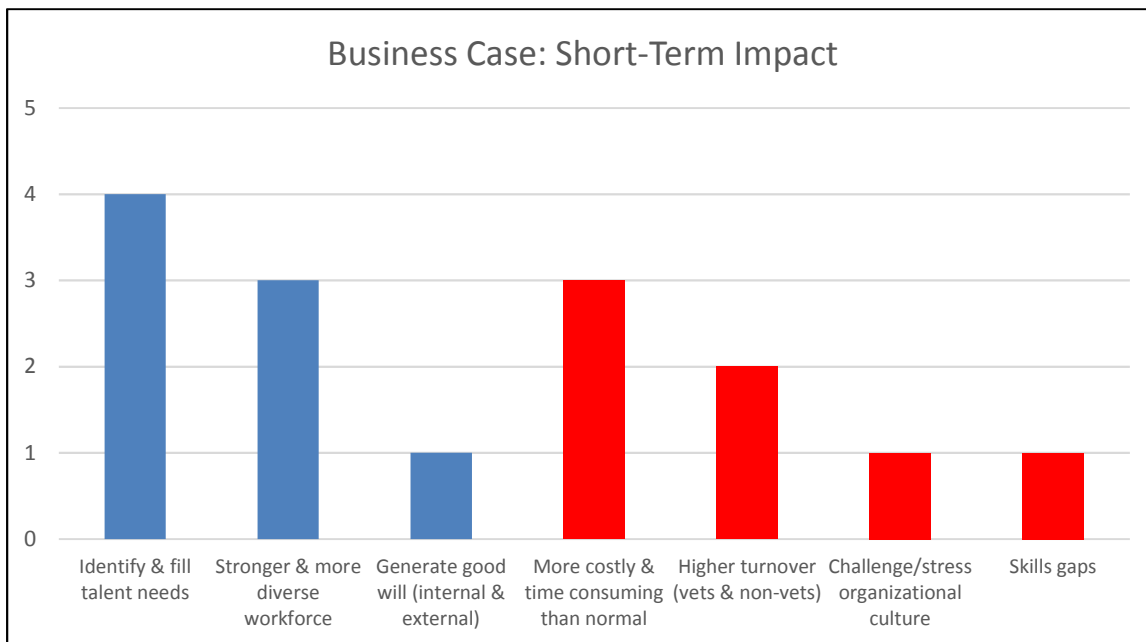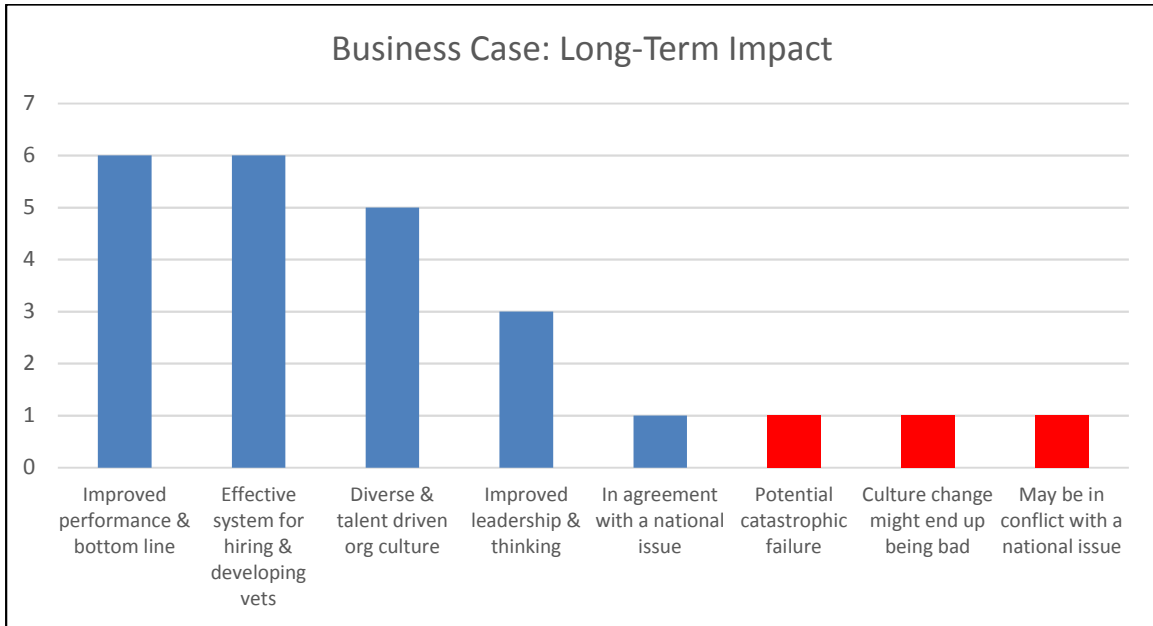
Business Case: Long-Term Impact

Chart 8. Potential Long-term Impacts. Blue = Positive. Red = Negative.

Interdependencies: Capabilities Needed and Adjustments Required

In order for businesses to start and maintain a successful veteran employment program, several key ingredients are required. Based on the collective experience of the participants, the following capabilities are needed and the following adjustments are often required.

Capabilities Needed

Businesses wanting to be successful, according to participants, need the following capabilities to ensure program success.

1. Dedicated resources: businesses must ensure adequate organizational capacity to support a veteran employment program via appropriate staffing, budget, incentives and allocated time
2. Change management: successful businesses leverage change agents (facilitators) to shape and prepare the work environment; offer military cultural awareness training; and deliver continual education and training opportunities to new veteran hires, talent acquisition staff and hiring managers
3. Effective methodologies: using culturally competent practices, businesses continue to refine practices while promoting proven concepts
4. Long-term commitment: successful companies have buy-in and support at all levels of management for the long haul and often have performance goals/bonuses tied to veteran employment goal achievement

Adjustments Required

Participants noted the following adjustments to existing business norms might be required to ensure a successful program.

1. Dedicated effort: businesses must have a dedicated staff as well as active, company-wide champions who integrate the effort into other existing talent acquisition and retention practices; similarly, businesses must have subject matter experts who have the trust of hiring managers and business leaders
2. Cultural change: to best integrate veteran hires, businesses may need to adjust language and culture, manage salary expectations, adjust for workforce age shifts, and updates the business brand to capture its veteran focus
3. Workforce learning and development: businesses may need to expand existing education and training initiatives, offer new employee recognition programs and refine job descriptions to accommodate skills match variances
4. HR management: businesses may need to offer specialized training on the veteran transition lifecycle and may need to adjust existing recruiting and hiring practices to accommodate the veteran employee; businesses may also need to monitor and adjust retention programs and expectations for veterans v. non-veteran employees

Business Risks

Without ensuring the capabilities and adjustments noted above are present, businesses face some risk in starting a veteran employment program.

1. Poor results or outright failure: businesses could make significant strides to start a veteran employment initiative only to have terrible experiences with new veteran hires
2. Excessive costs: given the competitive nature of finding workforce talent, finding the right veteran and building a full program could be a costly venture for businesses who build the program from scratch or fail to leverage existing resources
3. Poor execution or support: despite the best intentions, businesses may simply execute their initiative poorly due to competing priorities or lack of adequate investment of manpower and resources
4. Overly ambitious: businesses may make public proclamations to hire thousands of veterans but not have the resources, expertise or vacancies to match those proclamations; similarly, businesses may strive to ramp up an initiative without learning key lessons during the pilot phase
5. Resistance: layers of internal resistance (recruiters, hiring managers and business leaders) may intentionally resist business efforts for one reason or another

6. Public relations failure: even well intended programs have weaknesses; when veteran employees have poor experiences with a business and that poor experience is repeated by more and more veterans, its possible that negative brand impacts could result

7. Normal business risks: there are always risks associated with hiring new employees; veterans are no different

How SHRM Foundation Can Help

In work session 3, participants were asked to identify ways SHRM Foundation could improve veteran employment outcomes. By the end of the session, twelve areas were identified. SHRM Foundation could help businesses with (in priority order):

1. Cultural adjustments
2. Finding veterans
3. Hiring mechanisms
4. Skills translation
5. Management support and buy-in
6. Measuring and achieving success
7. Training
8. Onboarding
9. Retention
10. Mentoring
11. Diversity
12. Healthcare

Details surrounding these issue areas, ways SHRM Foundation can help and potential causes of failure as determined by the summit participants can be found in Table 4.

	Issues	Ways SHRM Foundation can help	Potential Causes of Failure
1	**Cultural Adjustments (6)** 1. Cultural education & assimilation (veterans & company) 2. Military & business acumen training 3. Transparency 4. Company buy-in at all levels	1. Cultural competency training & education for vets & businesses 2. Create training & certification programs 3. Establish recognition programs (for businesses & veterans) 4. Establish a veteran employment network 5. Create a global resource pool with best practices	1. Insufficient buy-in and commitment (particularly Sr. leaders and Mngrs) 2. Inadequate education & training content & delivery 3. Lack of participation (HR, Managers, Vets, employees) 4. Waiting too long to intervene 5. Biases & frustrations
2	**Finding Veterans (6)** 1. Appropriate military talent sourcing channel 2. Finding "new" qualified vets to hire that fit company needs 3. Veteran availability and industry job forecasting 4. Encouraging vet hiring as part of diversity inclusion 5. Focus on the right "fit"	1. Global best practices collection 2. Constant market scans & market forecasts (both sides) 3. Drive marketing, connecting, & relationship building among the parties 4. Collaborating with VSOs, non-profits, and others 5. Create and manage mechanisms/processes to connect Vets and SMBs 6. Vetting assessment program that drives fit, translation & assimilation	1. Dynamic market; Politics 2. Company HR / recruitment not having time to do the work to market military; Lack of relationships between businesses & military/vets 3. Lack of resources: time, money, infrastructure, patience 4. Inadequate vetting of candidates & positions 5. Failure to integrate & engage best practices of hiring and assessment
3	**Hiring Mechanisms(5)** 1. Give SMBs an easy way to build their own veteran hiring program 2. Roadmap for integrating vet hiring with core hiring process 3. Veteran hiring is not integrated as a normal business practice	1. Create a SMB "Veteran hiring program" starter kit 2. Create a Veteran hiring & transition toolkit 3. Consolidate best practices to establish one gold standard 4. Build process map that layers vet hiring on top 5. C-level education, awareness & engagement programs 6. Sponsor research - value and ROI of veterans in the workforce	1. Wasteful; Cost prohibitive; Duplicate effort 2. Talent goals not met; Vets misunderstood; Disjointed hiring effort 3. One bad hire can spoil the SMB's willingness to hire again 4. Non-compliance; not adopted by SMBs 5. CPH; Adverse effects of failure; Relationship dependent
4	**Skills Translation (4)** 1. Translating military training and schools into corporate terms 2. Aligning military training to business standards & certs 3. Skills and experience translation 4. Corporate America does not understand the capabilities that vet brings to table (soft skills, behaviors, character)	1. Create & distribute a document translating military skills & education to business talent needs 2. Matrix military training to industry standards & cert programs 3. Sponsor research that quantifies the ROI & performance of Vet hires 4. Educate HR professionals about hiring for capabilities	1. No one reads it; Training doesn't match industry needs 2. Lack of commitment; If it isn't broke, don't fix it [attitude] 3. Too focused on apples to apples skills 4. Education not adequate; Communication not up to task; Message isn't compelling
5	**Management Support & Commitment (3)** 1. Transparency 2. Company buy-in at all levels 3. Businesses do not understand the value & capabilities vets brings to table (soft skills, behaviors, character)	1. Establish affinity groups / mechanisms; Checkpoints for retro-identification 2. Training / education beyond HR & recruitment; Internal propagation of surveys and recognition of vets currently working 3. Educate HR professionals about hiring for capabilities	1.Lack of participation; Perceived benefit; Manual data mngt 2. No buy-in from CEO / leader may kill the initiative to hire; No buy-in from HMs limits vets from consideration and being hired 3. Education not adequate; Communication not up to task; Message isn't compelling

Table 4. Issues and Ways SHRM Foundation Can Help

6	* Measuring & Achieving Success (3) 1. What does success look like? What is it? 2. Transparency 3. Company buy-in at all levels	1. National standard definition of "success" 2. Establish affinity groups / mechanisms; Checkpoints for retro-identification 3. Training / education beyond HR & recruitment; Internal propagation of surveys and recognition of vets currently working	1. Needle doesn't move; ambiguity, uncertainty, and disagreement 2. Lack of participation; Perceived benefit; Manual data mngt 3. No buy-in from CEO / leader may kill the initiative to hire; No buy-in from HMs limits vets from consideration and being hired
7	* Training (3) 1. Training 2. Saleable training for all HR professionals 3. Skills gap: Fee; HR; Applicant; Market	1. Provide online courses (for both HR/Businesses & transitioning Veterans) 2. Build a training toolkit & distribute it & measure impact (short & digestible) 3. Market survey/research on the market's need for skills	1. [business/military acumen & cultural competencies - both sides] 2. More of the same; Overcomplicated; Not digestible 3. Retention
8	* Onboarding (3) 1. Onboarding 2. Career path 3. Employee incentives	1. Specified training: HR; Hiring managers; Flexible timeline 2. Road maps; Identify KSA gaps to job design 3. Guidance on benefits administration; Dos and Don'ts	1. Reputation; $; Not proper investment 2. Retention reduction; turnover ratio 3. N/A
9	* Retention (2) 1. Retention (turnover) 2. Retention	1. Develop a career roadmap; Career coaching 2. Performance planning management; subtle recognition	1. Fear of unemployment; No $ 2. N/A
10	* Mentoring (2) 1. Mentoring 2. Identifying "existing" vets in your company	1. External & internal outreach; Formalized; Design metrics 2. Ongoing employment survey; Success stories; Marketing campaign	1. No ROI / metrics; Cultural issues; Imbalance mentors to mentees 2. Companies may have internal policies that they feel prohibited from asking
11	* Diversity (2) 1. Embrace "Diversity" label - both as Vet & HR 2. Encouraging vet hiring as part of diversity inclusion	1. Educate: Who is the Vet?; What have they done / experienced? 2. Promote benefits of diversity in organization; Encourage policy around the diversity issue (State & Fed)	1. Surface level discussions 2. Message doesn't resonate; Vet not accepted as part of diversity planning
12	* Healthcare (1) 1. Behavioral health needs & stereotypes	1. Flexibility of benefits packages	1. Rigidity of mindset of Vet & HR

Table 4 (cont'd). Issues and Ways SHRM Foundation Can Help

With these thoughts in mind, work groups were asked to prioritize actions based on the action's importance to the project's goals and its difficulty to implement. By doing so, groups put actions into four categories: luxury (low importance, high difficulty), low hanging fruit (low importance, low difficulty), target (high importance, low difficulty) and strategic (high importance, high difficulty).
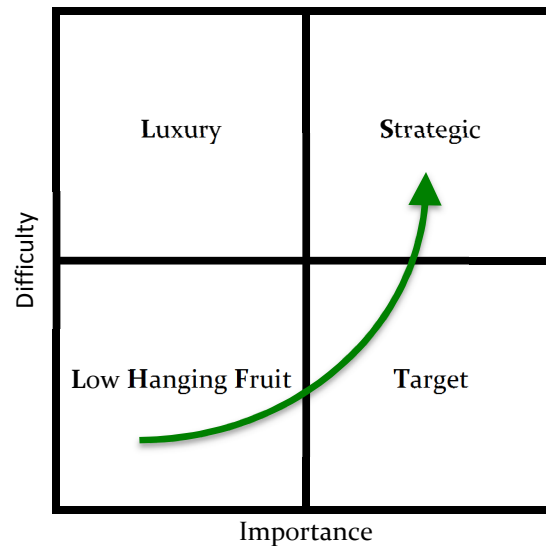
Diagram 1. Action Items Prioritization Matrix

By completing this 2x2 matrix, participants helped SHRM Foundation prioritize the work ahead. Experiences show working from lower left to upper right quadrants helps stakeholders gain quick wins (low hanging fruit) while working towards the most difficult work (strategic), required. Work groups prioritized specific actions as found in Diagram 2 below.

Luxury	Strategic
* Guidance on benefits administration * Forecast and mapping vets to jobs	* Cultural competency education program for businesses / HR professionals * Business culture education for veterans * Educate HR managers on value & cultural diversity of hiring vets * Career coaching/mentoring career skills program for vets within companies * Veteran hiring process map * Partner with armed services * Convert military training to industry standards * Research the skills needed in the marketplace * Affinity groups in companies * Military hiring certification program for businesses * National standard definition of "success"
Low Hanging Fruit	**Target**
* Online training for new work skills * Military training skills guide (document that explains military schools/training) * Promote workforce diversity * Profile success stories	* "Veteran Workforce Transition Program" starter toolkit for small biz & HR * "Veteran Recruiting & Hiring" toolkit for small biz & HR professionals * Toolkit to educate business on military culture * HR Training kit * Add a cultural competency block to SHRM BOCK * Global best practices collection & share them with others (2) * Global resource pool (sharing knowledge, tools, best practices, and ideas) * Retention management performance planning * SHRM as a conduit for messaging * SHRM drives "Count me in" campaign at company level (encourage hiring vets) * Mandatory government engagement

Diagram 2. Prioritized Action Items

Existing Practices/Programs

During the last session of the day, work groups were tasked to identify existing practices or programs that businesses should replicate or leverage to start or improve their veteran employment program. While not all-inclusive, the list found in the Table 5 captures a helpful list of resources businesses could access to refine their offerings. The SHRM Foundation and NAVSO will use this list, coupled with additional resources, to equip SHRM members with important resources that improve veteran hiring and retention.

Programs / Opportunities	Scope	Comments
Helmets & Hardhats	Apprenticeship	National; non-traditional experience pathway
National universities	Campus recruiting	Working with campus liaisons
Onward to Opportunity	Career Skills - Industry training	Partnering with VCTP
MSSA (Microsoft)	Career Skills Training (IT)	Helps move active duty service members into certain IT jobs
VetFit (USAA)	Career Skills training (IT) - BS program for JAVA Developers	Placement
Troops to Teachers	Career skills training (teaching) - transition to classrooms	Pathway to teaching certification
Student Veterans of America	Career skills: teaches vets how to function in the civilian workforce	Leadership Institute Series
Hire Heroes USA	Coaching - resumes & interviewing skills	Growing internationally (>13,000)
COOL	Credentialing opportunity online	Focus on existing members to be prepared before exiting
Guide On	Digital resume skills translation	Free
JAN (askjan.org)	Employers & employees, VSOs	Free confidential guidance for accommodation questions
Hiring Heroes Employer Roadmap	Employers & Vets transitioning	Free, vetted, & mature program
IVMF & Victory Spark	Entrepreneurs; Research & thought leadership	Entrepreneurship: VCTP, VEB
Chamber, Hire Heroes USA, SkillBridge, Mission Continues	Fellowships	Varied national
CNAS	GE tool kit; Research & thought leadership	
American Corporate Partners	Mentoring program - must pay to participate	Pairs a transitioning veteran with business professional
Deloitte, Exxon, GE, USAA, & Veterati	Mentoring programs (e.g. digital best practices; research & thought leadership)	International
Bunker Labs	National Program	Entrepreneurship accelerator
Pscyh Armor	Ntl - Business acumen training for military; 1-stop shopping online	Free, adaptable, useful videos, creates synergies
FourBlock	Professional & career development; small group training	Good for small orgs and SMEs
Bush Center	Research & thought leadership	
Gallup	Research & thought leadership	
Heinz, USAA, Goldman, GE	Rotational Programs	Company specific
US Army Broadening Program	Strategic Broadening	
Disney Veteran Institute	Training	Revamping
Vets Lead (USAA)	USAA < 2 years separation	High-touch, long-term; very specific roles, 12 mos.
SBA Vet Program	Wide variety of tools	
Work Force Opportunity Services	Work study for specific jobs	Designed to match sponsoring company specific reqts

Table 5. Existing Practices and Programs

Research Questions

During the first work session, participants were challenged to identify questions researchers could help answer that would improve veteran engagement and integration in the workforce. The follow list of research questions was developed. This list is prioritized based on the number of similar questions offered by the summit's participants. SHRM Foundation and NAVSO will further examine this list to identify research opportunities in 2017 and 2018.

1. What are the cultural differences, competencies, acumens and perspectives that the interested parties (i.e. businesses and veterans) need to understand?
2. What beliefs, biases and misperceptions are negatively influencing employers' decisions to hire veterans, particularly vets with disabilities (e.g. PTSD, amputee, etc.)?
3. What is the value added to businesses when veterans transition into the workforce?
4. What is the timeline (and time for each step) that can be expected for a veteran to successfully transition into the workforce (based on empirical data)?
5. What actions and education for veterans and hiring managers will improve and quicken the cultural assimilation of veterans brought into the workforce?
6. What impact does transitioning to the workforce have on veterans?
7. How can veterans be identified, reached and assessed earlier to help improve assessing their skills, prepare them for the cultural changes and find the right fit?
8. What metrics and measures can HR professionals use to accurately assess a veteran candidate's skills, ensure proper fit and predict career performance?
9. What relevant policies, programs and initiatives (regardless of where or what level) have proven effective and can be employed elsewhere?
10. What is the effectiveness of the various existing veteran transition programs?
11. How can we better measure transitioning veterans in the workforce using empirical data/statistics (i.e. employment, underemployment, retention, hiring, performance, etc.) to evaluate interventions that have been used?
12. Which segments of the veteran population (i.e. demographics: age, skills, rank, locations, race, etc.) require the most assistance to enter the workforce and how do the numbers compare with the business demand?
13. How can mentoring and mentoring programs improve the veteran hiring, placement and transition process?
14. What impact does geography and geographic location have on bringing veterans into the workforce?

Next Steps

Based on the ideas generated from convening participants and work groups, SHRM Foundation and NAVSO feel confidently equipped to work with stakeholders to meet the longer-term goals for this project.

The SHRM Foundation will continue to work with corporate partners and veteran-serving organizations to address the challenges of veteran employment and transition, to be an advocate to SHRM members and to be a catalyst for additional research on these important issues.

Specifically, several actions have been identified that the SHRM Foundation can champion to support this undertaking, including but not limited to:
- Establishing and promoting cultural competency and acumen education and training programs for both veterans and businesses;
- Creating a global knowledge and resources community of practice; encourage participation and the exchange of ideas, best practices, and successes;
- Creating veteran transition training and program starter toolkits with process maps & career pathing for small businesses, HR professionals, and others;
- Translating military skills and experiences into workforce applications;
- Assisting and encouraging small businesses to find and employ veterans in their workforce;
- Creating a national definition of "success" as it applies to a veteran transitioning into the workforce; and
- Serving as the conduit for messaging on behalf of transitioning veterans in the workforce, including calls for research and access to existing programs.