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# Veterans & Military Personnel Employment Guide

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You have numerous resources to assist you in achieving your professional goals as a graduate student at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy. You may, however, face some additional challenges in rephrasing your military accomplishments and experiences to portray skills that closely align with employers' needs. This Career Development Guide provides an overview of resources to assist you in successfully preparing for the job search, "demilitarizing" your accomplishments, and identifying a variety of employers specifically interested in hiring veterans.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. I have a variety of interests and qualifications. How do I know which experiences align with careers in public policy?

Your military experience is a valuable asset to employers and has provided you excellent opportunities for training, practical experience, and advancement. Employers want applicants who understand their strengths and can effectively communicate how a position aligns with their skills and professional goals. Reflect on your values, interests, and qualifications when you think about possible career fields, work environments, and lifestyle implications. In addition to meeting with a Career Development Office (CDO) counselor and attending workshops, review the [Career Development Guides](#) to assist you in identifying transferable skills and interests.

#### In developing your preliminary career plan, answer the following questions:

- What type(s) of work do you really enjoy doing? Which industries appeal to you?
- Which careers will allow you to do the type of work you find enjoyable?
- What specific jobs should you apply for within your chosen career field(s)?
- In reference to the specific jobs you intend to apply for, how well qualified are you?
- How has your military experience, skills, and training prepared you for the job(s)?
- How has any prior civilian work experience helped prepare you for the job(s)?
- How does your formal education tie in with the job(s) you will be applying for?
- Do you have any weak areas, in terms of your work experience, skills, and education?
- How can you correct or compensate for any weak areas?
- What general strengths do you have? How will these benefit your new employer?
- What geographic restrictions do you want to place on your job search?
- Are there other restrictions you need to consider? Do you also need to consider your spouse's requirements to find a job?
- Are there limitations to the amount of travel you are willing to do?
- Are there limitations to the amount of time you are willing to spend away from family?
- Are there limitations on the amount of overtime you are willing to work?
- Are there certain industries you prefer not to work in?
- What is your minimum starting salary requirement? What do you think you should receive?
- For the job(s) you have selected, how will you identify open positions?

(From VetJobs.com)

**When reviewing skill sets, it is important to consider how you built expertise in a particular area. Let's consider various skill sets commonly honed in the military:**

QUALIFICATION	ASSOCIATED SKILLS
Project Management & Leadership Skills	Coordinating/leading teams, meeting deadlines, defining goals and objectives, managing logistics, collaborating with internal and external constituents
Analytical Skills	Conducting quantitative research, collecting qualitative data, performing calculations, identifying problems and solutions
Communication Skills	Presenting findings verbally and via written reports, synthesizing and communicating results via tables/graphs, liaising between internal and external divisions and departments

Remember, career planning takes time and effort. The Harris Public Policy **Action Plan CDG** can help you divide your time effectively between educational and career-oriented pursuits and outline key resources available to you as a UChicago student.

**2. How can I emphasize skills and qualifications that are most relevant to my current and/or revised career goals? What are my selling points as a veteran?**

**■ DEMILITARIZE AND QUANTIFY YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

It is important to rephrase military jargon to civilian terminology in your accomplishments so that organizations and corporations understand the importance of your achievements and their measurable outcomes. It is also important to quantify your accomplishments to illustrate the scope of your work.

(From Hireahero.com and USmilitary.about.com)

Examples:

- Decreased staff attrition rate by 22 percent by implementing six trainings and two team-building programs, resulting in \$2 million in human capital and recruitment savings
- Received Army Achievement Award for completing 500-plus medical evaluations and developing patient database using Microsoft Excel to improve reporting functions and track 2,000-plus patients' demographics and medical records
- Oversaw transportation logistics for over 20 Air Force jets valued in excess of \$300 million and achieved 100 percent operational readiness scores for three consecutive years
- Tracked expenses, allocated funds, and oversaw up to \$20 million in equipment and supplies for five multi-million dollar projects

## ■ SKILLS TRANSLATOR

The **Skills Translator** at [www.military.com/skills-translator/mos-translator](http://www.military.com/skills-translator/mos-translator) identifies transferable skill sets for a number of military positions. For example, positions requiring project management or data analysis in the military often strengthen a variety of skills (listed below) applicable to careers as policy/program analysts, consultants, program and evaluation specialists:

### Skills

- Active learning and listening
- Complex problem-solving
- Critical thinking
- Identifying problems and solutions
- Management of personnel resources
- Operations analysis
- Quality control analysis
- Systems evaluation

### Transferable Activities

- Conducting qualitative and quantitative research
- Advising clients or prospects
- Constructing project design and logistics
- Preparing reports to convey findings and recommend ABC initiatives
- Understanding government regulations and divisions
- Collecting information from various resources (journals, individuals, annual reports, etc.)

## 3. I need help preparing my resume and cover letter. Who can help me?

A well-prepared resume and cover letter are essential tools in securing an interview. The CDO recommends that all students consider the following resources to assist in revising application materials:

- Writing effective resumes and cover letters is a skill that requires time and practice. Schedule an appointment to meet with a Harris Public Policy counselor through **Harrislink** to review your resume and cover letter.
- Review resume and cover letter CDGs and templates at the **CDO website**.
- Once you have identified the key transferable skills sets you would like to highlight, brainstorm, and list experiences (professional, academic, and extracurricular) that align with each skill set.

Use the following prompts to assist in building your accomplishments within each skill set:

- Who (management, peer collaborations)
- What (project outlines, deliverables, steps)
- Why (purpose of project)
- Where (technology and systems used, global/local impact)
- When (period of time, how often)
- How (tools, organizing, skills used)
- Impact (outcomes, results, savings, revenues)
- Check out and review a copy of *Military to Federal Career Guide & CD, 2nd Edition*, by Kathryn Troutman, from the CDO Library
- Participate in the CDO's professional development workshops

## 4. How do I identify positions and organizations of interest to me in my target fields?

### What criteria should I keep in mind when considering various career paths?

Once you have determined which career fields are a good fit, you should explore industries, job descriptions, companies and/or organizations, typical salaries, and benefits. The **Career Development Guides on the CDO website** will be very helpful throughout this process.

The following sites provide career advice specifically for veterans and identify employers that give preference to hiring U.S. veterans.

› **Careers for Transitioning Military**, [jobs.taonline.com/JobSeekerX/SearchCompanies.asp](http://jobs.taonline.com/JobSeekerX/SearchCompanies.asp)

- Provides a database of “Military Friendly Companies”

› **Veterans’ Preference**, [www.fedshirevets.gov/job/vetpref/index.aspx](http://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/vetpref/index.aspx)

- Gives preference in appointment to eligible veterans over other applicants
- Applies to virtually all new appointments in both the competitive and excepted service

› **Vets 2 Feds Career Development Program**, <http://www.vet2vetusa.org>

- Designed to recruit and support the development of our nation’s student veterans for careers with the federal government.
- Key employer partners include the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Department of Defense, Department of Labor, Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Homeland Security.

› **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment VetSuccess Program**, [www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre)

- Assists veterans with service-connected disabilities with career preparation and development Services include:
  - Comprehensive rehabilitation evaluation to determine abilities, skills, and interests for employment
  - Vocational counseling and rehabilitation planning for employment services
  - Employment services such as job-training, job-seeking skills, resume development, and other work-readiness assistance
  - Assistance finding and keeping a job, including the use of special employer incentives and job accommodations
  - On-the-job training (OJT), apprenticeships, and non-paid work experiences
  - Post-secondary training at a college, vocational, technical, or business school
  - Supportive rehabilitation services including case management, counseling, and medical referrals
  - Independent living services for veterans unable to work due to the severity of their disabilities

## 5. What practical experience can I gain while I am still a Harris student?

In addition to military training and work experience(s), do not forget to participate in professional and campus organizations (see **Campus Resources**). These activities count as experience in many industries, will help you develop a network of contacts, and provide an opportunity to develop additional skills. You can also gain valuable work experience by volunteering or serving as an intern at a non-profit organization.

## 6. How do I prepare for an interview?

In addition to reviewing the **Interview CDG**, make an appointment with your CDO counselor to discuss interview preparation, execution, and follow up.

## 7. What additional career resources are available on campus?

### International Security and Veterans Initiative (ISAVI)

The International Security and Veterans Initiative (ISAVI) is a Harris School community affinity group open to all Harris students and alumni. Contact: [isavi-request@lists.uchicago.edu](mailto:isavi-request@lists.uchicago.edu).

### Military Affinity Group

The Military Affinity Group (MAG) was created to serve the University community by contributing to the intellectual life on campus and forming a civil-military bridge for students, faculty, and staff at the University of Chicago. Find out more about MAG and additional Affinity Groups at : [alumniandfriends.uchicago.edu/affinity](http://alumniandfriends.uchicago.edu/affinity).

### Career Advancement Resources

- Chicago Career Connection (CCC) is an online tool specifically for University of Chicago students and alumni accessible via the Career Advancement website at [careeradvancement.uchicago.edu](http://careeradvancement.uchicago.edu). CCC lists internships and full-time employment opportunities in a variety of sectors and industries, at both national and international locations.
- You can also sign up for CA’s **listserve**s via CCC to receive updates on career-related programs and job leads in specific industries.
- CA programs include employer presentations, alumni panels, and career fairs. Check the CA event calendar regularly for details.

## UChicago Alumni Directory

Networking is essential in any job search, particularly because so many opportunities are not advertised. Informational interviewing is also an important component in researching jobs, industries, and organizations/companies. The UChicago Alumni Directory will be very helpful in identifying University of Chicago alumni in your field of interest and conducting informational interviews. Sign in today at [www.uchicagoalumni.org/directory.html](http://www.uchicagoalumni.org/directory.html).

## KEY RESOURCES

The following websites post positions and career development resources specifically for veterans and job seekers interested in public sector careers:

› **Career One Stop Centers**, [www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)

Provides a variety of career and employment services to military personnel transitioning into the civilian workforce.

› **The American Legion**, [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

Dedicates itself to helping veterans and provides list of websites directed specifically for veterans and their needs.

› **Best Places to Work**, [www.bestplacetowork.org](http://www.bestplacetowork.org)

- Based on data from 263,000 civil servants, the Partnership has compiled its Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings of 290 federal agencies, offices, and subcomponents.
- Best Places to Work not only ranks agencies based on employee satisfaction, but also on pay, benefits, development opportunities, work/life balance, and more.
- One of the best features of this site is that users can compare up to three agencies at once and create customized profiles based on the criteria in which they are most interested.

› **Career Command Post**, [www.careercommandpost.com](http://www.careercommandpost.com)

Specializes in connecting transitioning active duty military personnel and armed forces veterans with civilian employers hiring for executive, managerial, professional, technical, skilled, and semi-skilled positions.

› **Career One Stop**, [www.careeronestop.org/MilitaryTransition](http://www.careeronestop.org/MilitaryTransition)

The Key to Career Success campaign connects veterans and transitioning service members with high quality career planning, training, and job search resources.

› **Civilian Jobs**, [www.civilianjobs.com](http://www.civilianjobs.com)

This site has many resources for military personnel interested in civilian careers.

› **Corporate Gray Online**, [www.corporategray.com](http://www.corporategray.com)

Former military personnel can post resumes and search for jobs; this site also includes great articles and resources.

› **Defense Talent Network**, [www.defensetalent.com/](http://www.defensetalent.com/)

Provides a job board for the defense, aerospace and homeland security industries (and a good site for transitioning military personnel) and allows job seekers to post resumes and create job-search agents.

› **Half of Us**, [www.halfofus.com/veterans](http://www.halfofus.com/veterans)

Provides a variety of resources to assist veterans with their personal and professional lives.

› **HireAHero.org**, [www.hireahero.org](http://www.hireahero.org)

Military community network providing information on job searches, creating resumes, and identifying employers.

› **Keys to Career Success**, [www.careeronestop.org/militarytransition](http://www.careeronestop.org/militarytransition)

Provides access to workforce information and services to assist military service members and veterans transition to civilian careers.

› **Making the Difference**, [www.makingthedifference.org](http://www.makingthedifference.org)

- Student-centered website with numerous resources for finding and applying for federal jobs and internships.
- Making the Difference has an internship database and a list of available entry-level positions, tips for creating federal résumés and navigating the security clearance process, and profiles of young, dynamic federal employees.

› **Military.com**, [www.military.com](http://www.military.com)

Provides information for veterans on the job search, security clearance jobs, translating military skills, resumes, career advice, job fairs, veterans career network, and more than 10,000 job postings.

› **Military Hire**, [www.militaryhire.com](http://www.militaryhire.com)

- Operated by veterans for veterans, this site's mission is to help service veterans (active duty, reserve, and National Guard) and their immediate family members transition to civilian employment.
- Job-seekers can conduct a detailed job search, post your resume, and take advantage of career resources.

› **National Veterans Foundation**, [www.nvf.org](http://www.nvf.org)

- Serves the crisis management, information and referral needs of all U.S.
- Veterans and their families through management and operation of the nation's only toll-free helpline for all veterans and their families.

› **Quintessential Careers**, [www.quintcareers.com/former\\_military.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/former_military.html)

- Contains career and job sites particularly for military personnel transitioning to civilian jobs.

› **RecruitMilitary.com**, [recruitmilitary.com](http://recruitmilitary.com)

- Targets veterans and service members transitioning from military to the civilian workforce.
- Services include: job searching by location and job type; military-to-civilian pay calculator; a resume builder; resume and cover letter folder (to store various versions), a resume agent, and much more.

› **Transition Assistance Online (TAO)**, [www.taonline.com](http://www.taonline.com)

- One-stop shop for transitioning armed service members and Veterans.
- Offers a bank that allows interested employers from across the country to view applicants' resumes.
- Provides information for job seekers, attaining security clearance, transitioning tools, military friendly companies, and military job fairs.

› **VetJobs.com**, [vetjobs.com](http://vetjobs.com) & [www.veteranstoday.com](http://www.veteranstoday.com)

- Great career sites for veterans and transitioning military personnel and their family members.
- Applicants can search job openings within all levels and genres, and post resumes.

› **Veterans Outreach Services**, [www.veteransoutreachcenter.org](http://www.veteransoutreachcenter.org)

- Aims to help veterans stabilize and re-enter the workforce.
- Veterans and their immediate family members complementary receive: career counseling; skills assessments; specialized vocational workshops; resume assistance; job networking and focus groups; job readiness, life skills and occupational services

› **Vets4Hire**, [www.veterans4hire.com](http://www.veterans4hire.com)

- Transitioning U.S. military and veterans can search job listings (by profession, location, keyword) and post resumes.
- Also includes information on career fairs/hiring forums and useful career articles.

› **USAJOBS.gov**, [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov)

- This is the government's official jobs website, and it has tens of thousands of positions posted on it at any given time.
- Students can generate a username and password on this site, which will allow them to create up to five federal résumés, as well as save their job searches and have relevant positions emailed to them automatically.

› **U.S. Department of Labor**, [www.dol.gov/dol/audience/aud-veterans.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/audience/aud-veterans.htm)

Provides a shortcut to information and services that the Department of Labor (DOL) offers veterans including:

- DOL employment opportunities [www.dol.gov/dol/jobs/veterans.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/jobs/veterans.htm)
- National Veterans Training Institute [www.dol.gov/vets/programs/fact/NVTIFS09.htm](http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/fact/NVTIFS09.htm)
- Veterans Employment and Training Service [www.dol.gov/vets/](http://www.dol.gov/vets/)

› **Office of Personnel Management**, [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov)

Visit the homepage of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management to learn more about security clearances, veterans' preference, student loan repayment assistance and more, as well as up-to-date information on hiring trends and reforms.