REPORT

FINAL REPORT

Exploring Reemployment Strategies for Army Veterans: Implementation of State Pilots

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CONTENTS

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GLOSSARY/LIST OF ACRONYMS

AARs	After-action Reviews
AJCs	American Job Centers
ADM	Archer Daniels Midland
ACAP	Army Career and Alumni Program
BAT	Business Architecture Team
CMS	Central Management Services
CMA	Centurion Military Alliance
CDL	Commercial Driver's License
COOL	Credentialing Opportunities On-Line
DPSC	Department of Public Safety and Corrections
DVOPs	Disabled Veterans Outreach Program representatives
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DOL	U.S. Department of Labor
EAI	Employability Assessment Interview
EAN	Employer Account Number
ESGR	Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
ETA	Employment and Training Administration
ES	Employment Services
FCCC	Federal Claims Control Center
FTP	File Transfer Protocol
GDDS	Georgia Department of Driver Services
GDEcD	Georgia Department of Economic Development
GDOL	Georgia Department of Labor
GDVS	Georgia Department of Veterans Services
GOWD	Governor's Office Workforce Development
HWO	Help Wanted Online
HRC	Human Resources Command
IDES	Illinois Department of Employment Security
IDVA	Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs
IJL	IllinoisJobLink.com
JCEP	Job Connection Education Program
JVSG	Jobs for Veterans State Grant Program
LVERs	Local veterans employment representatives
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
MOC/MOS	Military occupational codes/specialties
NVTI	National Veterans Training Institute
NCDC	North Carolina Department of Commerce

NCDVA	North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs
NCDOA	North Carolina Department of Administration
OUI	Office of Unemployment Insurance
POS	Priority of service
REA	Reemployment Eligibility Assessment
RESEA	Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment
RCC	Richland Community College
SEO	Search engine optimization
SBEs	Significant barriers to employment
SSNs	Social Security numbers
STSEI	State of Texas Soldier Employment Initiative
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
TSTW	Texas Skills to Work
TVC	Texas Veterans Commission
TVLP	Texas Veterans Leadership Program
TWC	Texas Workforce Commission
TAP	Transition Assistance Program
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
UIPL	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter
UCX	Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service Members
UI	Unemployment Insurance
VCRC	Veteran Career Resource Center
VFW	Veterans of Foreign Wars
VETS	Veterans' Employment and Training Service
VRRSs	Veterans' resources and referral specialists
WRIS	Wage Record Interchange System
WTU	Warrior Transition Unit
WIT	Work in Texas
WOTC	Work Opportunity Tax Credit
WIA	Workforce Investment Act
WIASRD	Workforce Investment Act Standardized Record Data
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Overview of the Army UCX Claimants' Initiative

The U.S. Army and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) collaborated to further the goals of the Army Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service Members (UCX) Claimants' Initiative; these goals were to (1) create strong collaborative partnerships among the unemployment insurance (UI) system, the public workforce system, and the three components of the Army (active, Reserve, and National Guard) to support the rapid reemployment of UCX claimants; (2) improve data sharing to better understand UCX claimants and their outreach and service needs; and (3) increase outreach, exposure to jobs, and reemployment strategies for UCX claimants that combine existing resources with innovative service delivery approaches. Each of the four states that received pilot grants from DOL—Georgia, Illinois, North Carolina, and Texas—formed a team of partners from various agencies and proposed pilot projects and data sharing improvements to be implemented between July 2012 and June 2015 with $750,000 in federal grant funding.

B. Study Design

To broadly inform efforts to expand reemployment strategies for veterans, Mathematica Policy Research (Mathematica) evaluated the implementation and outcomes of the initiative to identify lessons learned and promising practices among the grantees' exploratory strategies. The final evaluation design included (1) an implementation analysis, (2) an outcomes analysis for the Georgia grantee, and (3) an analysis of the feasibility of data linking based on an innovative data-sharing project between Georgia and the Army. DOL selected the combination of analyses to provide a multifaceted assessment of lessons learned and promising practices, goals achieved, and the extent of participation and endorsement by relevant partners, and to describe other topics of interest, such as how veterans receive services and how the veterans' priority of service (POS) requirement is applied in local American Job Centers (AJCs). The implementation analysis is the focus of this report; a later report on the outcomes analysis will be prepared as administrative data become available.

In this report, Mathematica used qualitative methods to address research questions related to implementation, identify factors that shaped states' implementation experiences, and draw lessons that the grantee states and others can use to inform future approaches. The report describes each state's UI and workforce program operations, contextual factors that influence those operations, data-collection and data-sharing practices, services and outreach to UCX claimants and other veterans, and partnerships and procedures developed in implementing grant activities. We also detail challenges that states encountered during implementation and the methods they used to overcome those challenges to convey lessons learned and promising practices. The main body of this report contains a cross-state analysis capturing both the diversity of efforts and outputs and common experiences across states. Appendices document in detail each state's activities and experiences.

C. Common Challenges

Common challenges are aspects of the organizations, relationships, or grant that hindered the development or execution of grant strategies. Examples found in this evaluation were both

structural, and therefore likely to be encountered by any project until solutions are found, and specific to particular individuals or organizations.

One crosscutting structural challenge that grantees encountered involved the legal and security issues around sharing data across programs and agencies that made such sharing highly time consuming to negotiate if not impossible. Sustainability of partnerships and ongoing involvement of organizations was an issue, as participation by some faded over time. Staffing issues within organizations that did continue to participate were also sometimes problematic in that roles were not always filled with the most appropriate person or staff replacements effectively eliminated institutional knowledge and halted work on the project. The innovative design of the grant also created a challenge in that states were not accustomed to the wide latitude in selecting what issues to address and creatively designing their own projects; some stakeholders needed significant convincing that that was indeed the intent of the grantor.

D. Promising Practices and Recommendations

Promising practices, as described in this report, meet the objectives of the grant, are innovative, have gained traction with one or more grantees, may be feasibly pursued without significant known barriers to implementation, and have strong potential for sustainability and replicability. The following practices were identified as particularly promising or most actionable for further piloting and evaluation:

- The social media campaign developed by Illinois covered multiple platforms, directed targeted viewers to well-designed resources, and incorporated tracking metrics to measure results.

- Military skills translation and resume development are two areas widely recognized as being of critical importance to the reemployment of veterans. Texas, Georgia, and Illinois have adopted or developed software and tools for use in these areas which allow veterans to work independently or with staff to better connect with civilian employers, both on paper and in person. In addition, the skills translation software may be used by employers to create job postings that are tailored to veterans with particular skill sets by using military terminology.

- Some grantees are connecting staff with transitioning service members on post or through Warrior Transition Units early in their transition in an attempt to ease that process, provide personalized services, and minimize any periods of unemployment. Grantees widely agreed on the importance of reinstituting some form of integration with the transition assistance program (TAP). For now, staff on post in Texas position themselves near the TAP classroom so they can connect with attendees and offer their services. In Georgia, another pilot program has allowed staff to present in TAP sessions.

- Both North Carolina and Georgia observed benefits of their reemployment eligibility assessment (REA) programs for UI recipients who participated, and used grant funds to refer all UCX claimants to REA.

- Georgia and the Army are sharing data to create a merged file of unemployment compensation, wages, workforce services, and military data to answer research questions related to veterans' employment and service experiences over time. Texas has created an

image database of DD-214s, the certificate of release from active duty, to use in outreach and service delivery.

- Finally, Georgia, Illinois, and Texas have all enhanced intake forms, triage tools, signage, processes, and/or policies in response to the refocusing guidelines in Training and Employment Guidance Letters 19-13 (DOL 2014b) and 20-13 (DOL 2014a) to improve services to veterans in AJCs. These enhancements are intended to ensure that veterans with significant barriers to employment are correctly identified and routed to services and that veterans and others eligible for priority of service continue to be properly identified and served.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Overview of the Army UCX Claimants' Initiative

1. Initiative goals and objectives

The goals of the Army Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service Members (UCX) Initiative were to (1) create strong collaborative partnerships among the unemployment insurance (UI) system, the public workforce system, and the three components of the Army (active, Reserve, and National Guard) to support the rapid reemployment of UCX claimants; (2) improve data sharing to better understand UCX claimants and their outreach and service needs; and (3) increase outreach, exposure to jobs, and reemployment strategies for UCX claimants that combine existing resources with innovative service delivery approaches.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) [1] and the Army's United States Military Academy Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis at West Point launched this initiative. DOL asked four states (Georgia, Illinois, North Carolina, and Texas) to identify innovative reemployment strategies for veterans and form teams consisting of representatives from the UI, Employment Services (ES), and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs; the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS); Army (Regular, National Guard, and Reserve); and other federal, state, and local partners.

DOL provided grants of $750,000 to each of the four states; grant funds were released in late 2012 after each state submitted a satisfactory implementation plan detailing the pilot projects and data-sharing improvements it would undertake. The grants were intended to run for two years, ending on June 30, 2014, but were extended through June 30, 2015, to give grantees more time to implement their strategies. Each state was tasked with developing and implementing exploratory strategies related to seven objectives:

1. Develop strong collaborative partnerships among the UI system, the public workforce system, and the three Army components (Regular, National Guard, and Reserve) for UCX projects

2. Identify and implement innovative outreach projects

3. Develop service delivery strategies to enhance reemployment services and improve employment outcomes of UCX claimants

4. Identify and implement innovative data-sharing projects

5. Reinforce implementation of veterans' priority of service (POS)

6. Accurately track and report pilot outcomes

7. Ensure compliance with DOL requirements

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[1] At DOL, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), Office of Unemployment Insurance (OUI), and Office of Workforce Investment collaborated on this grant program.

2. Study design

To broadly inform efforts to expand reemployment strategies for veterans, this study evaluates the implementation and outcomes of the initiative to identify lessons learned and promising practices among the grantees' exploratory strategies. The implementation analysis is the focus of this report. The evaluation team will prepare a later report on the outcomes analysis as administrative data for analysis become available.[2]

The implementation analysis examines how the Army, UI and workforce systems, and other partners interacted and the success of each grantee in meeting the goals and objectives set by its state and by the initiative. We used qualitative methods to address research questions related to implementation, identify factors that shaped states' implementation experiences, and draw lessons that the grantee states and others can use to inform future approaches. The report describes state UI and workforce program operations, contextual factors that influence those operations, data-collection and data-sharing practices, services and outreach to UCX claimants and other veterans, and partnerships and procedures developed in implementing grant activities. We also detail challenges that states encountered during implementation and the methods they used to overcome those challenges to convey lessons learned and promising practices. The main body of this report contains a cross-state analysis capturing both the diversity of efforts and outputs and common experiences across states. The appendices document in detail each state's activities and experiences.

The research questions for the implementation study were based on the initiative's three primary goals and the first six of the seven objectives. Table I.1 shows how the research questions align with these goals. Data for the implementation analysis came from technical assistance calls with individual states, webinars and conference calls with all of the states, other periodic contacts with state staff, a site visit to Texas, the documents and forms created as part of state projects, and quarterly reports submitted by grantees.

3. Context for the Army UCX Claimants' Initiative

The UCX program provides income support during the transition period when former active duty, reserve, or National Guard members search for work. It is supported by transfers of funds from the budget of the appropriate military branch to the Unemployment Trust Fund, which reimburses the state that distributed funds to the ex-service member who had federal military wages.[3] In the decade before the Army UCX Claimants' Initiative began, the number of veterans receiving UCX and the cost of this program to the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) had significantly increased. For example, from 2002 to 2004, UCX recipients and costs increased about 75 percent and remained steady at this higher level for several years (Loughran 2008).

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[2] The outcomes analysis will use a file of merged Georgia and Army data to address research questions describing the target populations of the initiative, time lags to receipt of workforce services and UCX benefits, benefit duration and exhaustion, identification of potential exhaustees by Georgia's worker profiling and reemployment services model, and employment and earnings outcomes. That report will also discuss the feasibility of linking state and military data, which the Army will do using military data it already possesses and data from the Georgia departments of labor and economic development that are being shared as part of this project.

[3] The federal military wages must have been paid during the ex-service member's base period, which is the pre-unemployment period that states use to determine unemployment compensation eligibility and benefits.

Both the number of UCX-eligible veterans and the proportion of eligible veterans who claim the benefit had increased. In 2011, just before the initiative began, average weekly claims were 39,000 nationally (DOL 2015).[4] A Prudential survey (2012) found that only about half of separating service members attended a transition assistance program before this was mandated in 2011, and few used the reemployment resources offered through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant program. Further, many veterans mentioned their unfamiliarity with job searching and their lack of direct work experience in the civilian market (Crenshaw and Wright 2013).

Table I.1. Research questions and initiative goals

Initiative Goal: Creating strong collaborative partnerships to support the rapid reemployment of UCX claimants
What collaborations and partnerships among the UI system, the public workforce system, the three components of the Army, and other organizations that serve UCX claimants have been established through this initiative?
What aspects of these partnerships seem to have been particularly successful?
What challenges have been encountered in these partnerships? What potential solutions to those challenges have been found?
Initiative Goal: Improving data sharing to better understand UCX claimants and their outreach and service needs
What data-sharing strategies have been implemented across federal, state, and local programs as a result of the initiative? To what extent are they working? What data-sharing needs remain unmet?
To what extent can administrative data be consistently and effectively linked across multiple workforce systems and to Army data?
What are the challenges to and opportunities for implementing future data-sharing initiatives?
Initiative goal: Increasing outreach and service delivery
How are transitioning service members brought into the workforce system? How do they learn about potential UCX benefits and reemployment services for which they might be eligible?
What challenges do transitioning and ex-service members face in understanding UCX eligibility and filing procedures? What outreach strategies appear to address these challenges?
To what extent are state grantees evaluating implementation of their grant strategies and objectives?

To reduce UCX expenditures, the Army and DOL collaborated to support improved outreach and services to help veterans become reemployed more quickly. Many factors influence people's willingness and ability to work, when and how intensely they conduct a job search, and the types of positions they accept. To achieve reemployment goals, organizations that work with potential claimants and may influence their thinking and behaviors need to collaborate and share data.

4.   Grant planning and implementation process

The four state grantees were asked to develop plans for their grant funds by September 1, 2012, two months after their grants began on July 1, 2012. As shown in Table I.2, states developed their implementation plans and submitted initial drafts to DOL for review during August and September of 2012. DOL reviewed the plans, provided feedback, and held meetings to discuss the plans and develop asset maps. Immediately after award of the evaluation contract,

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[4] By 2014, average weekly claims had fallen to 26,000 as the economy improved.

Mathematica staff reviewed the initial implementation plans of the four states and related products of the earlier working groups and meetings involving the states, DOL, and the Army.

These documents described the activities and goals of each state and its participating regions or AJCs. Reviewing these documents shed light on how each state planned to achieve the goals of the initiative and enabled the study team to compare approaches. Activities and expenditures that were mutually agreeable to states and DOL were finalized after iterative rounds of revision and technical assistance involving the grantees, DOL, and Mathematica. Once states submitted acceptable revised plans, DOL approved expenditure of grant funds in late 2012.

In January 2013, Mathematica hosted a webinar for participants from the four states, the Army, and DOL so that the study team and participants could meet, disseminate information about the study, and answer questions. This meeting was also designed to help generate enthusiasm for the evaluation, obtain feedback on the study's design, and gain an understanding of grantees' technical assistance needs going forward. In addition, Mathematica shared promising practices and creative ideas found in the implementation plans, providing recognition to the grantees that developed them and disseminating ideas that the other states could replicate.

Delays were encountered between the release of funds and the beginning of implementation as grantees determined how best to operationalize their plans. Some states' activities required them to hire staff, which is a lengthy process, and then train the new staff and familiarize them with their roles under the grant. Other states needed to identify existing staff to implement grant activities and make them available to do so. Grant partners also needed to negotiate agreements on space, staff responsibilities, and data use.

During the grant period, states were required to submit quarterly reports in two parts: (1) narrative reports on the progress of their plan activities and (2) financial reports on their expenditures in DOL's standard grant reporting format. After the first year of the grant, DOL asked Mathematica to develop a narrative report template as a recommendation for the grantees to follow in an effort to improve the frequency of, and detail included in, the grant reports.

In spring 2013, after each of the state implementation plans had been accepted, Mathematica submitted detailed memos that reviewed each state's revised implementation plan, requested clarification where needed, identified potential issues with implementation, and suggested modifications for the grantees to consider. Mathematica then developed detailed discussion guides and facilitated in-depth discussions with each state about its implementation plan and methods for strengthening data collection and data sharing. We also provided technical assistance in areas suggested by the plan, requested by the state, or discussed in the initial webinar. The technical assistance varied by grantee but addressed some common activities across sites, such as developing data-sharing agreements, approaches to using shared data for outreach, and targeted outreach using existing data. Following each call, we provided each state with a formative feedback memo detailing additional information provided and requested, decisions made, and plans of action. We conducted three rounds of such calls throughout the grant period with each state except Texas, where we conducted a site visit in lieu of a third call. DOL and Mathematica held a second webinar and DOL held three all-grantee conference calls during the grant period to facilitate sharing of information about activities, challenges, and

solutions among states and to provide additional ideas on implementation activities for states where planned activities were not feasible.

The three day site visit to Texas in May 2015 provided an in-depth perspective on one grantee's activities, systems, challenges, and solutions. A Mathematica researcher conducted in-person, semistructured interviews with leaders of various aspects of the grant and with staff of partner organizations. Particular emphasis was placed on collaboration, best practices, and lessons learned. The researcher spent about half the time meeting with state workforce and veterans' staff in Austin, and half meeting with state veterans' staff at Fort Hood and Fort Bliss and other on-base personnel, staff of organizations that serve Camp Mabry and National Guard and Reserve soldiers in general, and management and line staff of the Round Rock and Killeen AJCs.

Table I.2 shows the types and dates of the formal interactions in which states participated as well as the initial and revised submission dates for each state's implementation plan.

Table I.2. Summary of participation, by state

State/Lead agency	Implementation plan	State technical assistance calls	Group calls and webinars	Site visit
Georgia (GDOL)	9/10/2012 – submitted 11/6/2012 – revised	10/15/2012 4/11/2013 11/20/2014 6/29/2015	1/11/2013 6/11/2013 12/4/2013 7/21/2014 1/9/2015	No
Illinois (IDES)	8/20/2012 – submitted 11/28/2012 – revised	10/4/2012 6/5/2013 10/14/2014 6/19/2015		No
North Carolina (NCDC)	8/31/2012 – submitted 12/19/2012 – revised	10/4/2012 4/2/2013 9/24/2014 4/28/2015		No
Texas (TVLP/TWC)	8/31/2012 – submitted 11/8/2012 – revised	10/3/2012 4/4/2013 10/2/2014		5/5/2015–5/7/2015

GDOL: Georgia Department of Labor; IDES: Illinois Department of Employment Security; NCDC: North Carolina Department of Commerce; TVLP: Texas Veterans Leadership Program; TWC: Texas Workforce Commission

From the outset, it was clear that the success of this initiative would depend on grantee flexibility. As mentioned, some early proposed grant activities were ultimately not included in final grant plans; some activities were not sufficiently innovative or aligned with the initiative's objectives and others were not feasible given staff availability and skills. In several cases, states further investigated their proposed activities and learned that they were not feasible, efficient, or a good use of resources.

This was particularly common in the area of social media use, which was a new field for several states and one that presented a high initial learning curve. As states mounted this curve, either through education, involving the proper state staff, or hiring outside consultants, they could develop beneficial and innovative social media campaigns. Flexibility also came into play later in projects when policy or legislative changes eliminated the possibility of implementing ideas states were already developing, requiring them to generate alternatives quickly.

B. Report roadmap

The remainder of this report provides a crosscutting analysis of the activities of the four grantee states, focusing on their similarities, while also highlighting a few of the differences between them. Chapter II presents a summary of findings, organized by the seven overarching objectives of the initiative. Chapter III presents promising practices identified across the grantees, challenges to grant planning and how they were addressed, as well as the sustainability and replicability of the various activities.

To inform organizations interested in replicating promising practices identified in Chapter III, Appendices A, B, C, and D detail each grantee's planned strategies and implementation and describe how grantees' activities differed from their original plans. Section A of each appendix summarizes the state's planned strategies and activities; Section B describes how the state implemented these strategies and activities within the framework of the initiative's seven overarching objectives. Section B also includes any specific action items remaining at the end of the grant. Many grant strategies and activities addressed multiple objectives; they are described under the most relevant objective in Section B. Section C of each appendix includes the grantee's reflections on its overall grant experience.

II. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The four states in this initiative proposed a variety of strategies to meet the seven objectives of the project, including those implemented at the local and state levels and with national partners. Some were implemented as proposed, while others were modified as the states gained additional understanding or encountered obstacles and opportunities. In this chapter, we provide a cross-state overview of the strategies as they were ultimately implemented, organized by objective. (In the appendix for each state grantee we explain, to the extent possible, inputs, rationales, and perceived benefits that informed grant strategies and activities, as well as evolutions in grant activities, outputs, costs, and any behavioral insights.) In addition to describing strategies and findings funded through the grant, we discuss relevant strategies described by grantees that were outside the grant. In Chapter III, we identify which of the strategies described in this chapter appear to be promising candidates for more widespread support and evaluation by DOL and other initiative stakeholders.

A. Collaborative partnerships (Objective 1)

Developing strong partnerships was a key goal of the grant yet the grantees achieved this with differing levels of scope and success.

1. Formal and informal partnership arrangements

a. State and local agency partnerships

Although the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL)'s partnering and networking was not as extensive as planned, it did collaborate closely with the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) on several grant strategies. These relationships will be maintained after the grant. Illinois's grant strategies were largely implemented within the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES). However, with the consolidation of the Wagner-Peyser and WIA program staff into the same physical offices in Illinois, job seekers in all four grantee states no longer have to go to different locations to get these services. Additionally, UI services in all four states are now provided by phone or online rather than in person. Workforce staff in each state can identify UI registrants in their computer systems and can direct outreach efforts to them.

The North Carolina Department of Commerce grant team participated in a veterans' work group created by the governor; the group intended to meet monthly at the National Guard Headquarters, though it has not convened every month and meetings have often been by phone. North Carolina's steering committee members share information about employment and training programs for North Carolina's veterans, which is then disseminated to management and field staff. Its steering committee included the manager of the Fort Bragg Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP, renamed Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program [TAP] in July 2014); representatives from the National Guard and North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; the Employment Security coordinator; the UCX/UC for Federal Employees (UCFE) claims coordinator; and staff from the North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions.

In Texas, close ties exist between the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), the Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP), and the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), and myriad other organizations that serve veterans or provide training, education, and employment more

broadly. These organizations collaborated closely during the grant, for example, by sharing real-time information about events, opportunities, and needs through active email groups.

b.   Business partnerships

All four states encourage businesses to participate in hiring fairs and maintain positive relationships with them that will benefit job seekers. For example, Georgia markets Troops to Trucks specifically to Georgia-based Coca-Cola, a very large employer of truck drivers, and aims to better connect the Army with the major trucking companies. Georgia also recruits large, veteran-friendly employers such as Home Depot and Coca-Cola into partnerships to support employment of veterans.

c.   Military partnerships (including TAP)

Grantees have had mixed success in reconnecting to the TAP program and TAP participants during the grant period. When state workforce agencies presented the Transition Assistance Program curriculum, AJCs near bases that provided transition assistance to service members had a connection with them and could offer other services such as inviting them to job fairs and working with them one on one. During TAP, the AJCs could include information on their services and other local resources. This interaction has reportedly decreased in several states as the contractor now presenting the standardized, national, three-day TAP curriculum does not present any local information and cannot grant time to others, such as workforce agency staff, to do so. Grant teams reported that soldiers coming out of TAP generally understand that resources are available but do not know how to access them or the extent of those resources.

The Georgia Department of Labor was asked by the regional DOL VETS representative to pilot participation in a series of five TAP sessions in Augusta, Columbus, Macon, Savannah, and Cobb County. In this pilot, GDOL was given time during the session for its staff to provide information on the resources available locally and how and where to access them, as well as information on local employers that were hiring and the skills they were seeking. On the first day of each session, GDOL registered participants in the job search system. GDOL staff were on site the entire three days, presented for two hours, answered questions, and provided additional information outside of the sessions that TAP contractor staff could not provide. The contractor distributed a feedback form at the end of the sessions and informally shared that they had found that transitioning service members want local information before separation, and that it was extremely valuable to get this information from GDOL during the TAP session. Transitioning service members also wish they had the opportunity to engage with workforce services staff before separation. Georgia hopes the pilot takes root and becomes the foundation for reintroducing local information to the TAP curriculum and connecting transitioning service members with local AJCs. Like Georgia, North Carolina also reported that presenting during TAP sessions at Fort Bragg and on other bases in the state appeared to benefit transitioning service members. IDES reported that it has no connection with TAP in Illinois.

Four staff members were hired in Texas under this grant to work with transitioning service members at Fort Hood, Fort Bliss, Ellington Field, and Camp Mabry. Two of these staff did not participate during the extension year of the project, but the staff at Fort Bliss and Fort Hood participated throughout. These staff members were located on post so they would be highly visible and easily accessible to transitioning service members. They provided information on the

transition process, UCX eligibility, employment and educational possibilities, resume development and interviewing skills, and other topics. They also got transitioning service members registered in Work in Texas. Although they could not present during TAP sessions, they located themselves in the hallways near the classroom so they could make contact with the participants and let them know about what they do and where to find them, about AJCs, and about the available services. These staff members reported that the transitioning service members with whom they worked were extremely grateful for the assistance because they were often unsure of what concrete steps to take, knew that their resumes were not adequate, or did not know how to conduct a job search in the local area.

Another promising partnership in Texas is between the Texas Army National Guard and Texas Veterans Leadership Program. The Texas Army National Guard sends a survey to units while they are deployed to identify soldiers who will be unemployed when they return in four to six months. For the past several years, it has shared its findings with the Veterans Leadership Program, which has then emailed the deployed soldiers to build relationships with them and work on the employment process, potentially reducing or eliminating their period of unemployment.

2. Other promising partnerships

The Illinois grantee partners with legislative representatives across Illinois to disseminate information about events it has planned in the legislative districts. Representatives generally have dissemination skills and access to considerable resources, including their constituent databases.

Texas created a task force email group early in the grant period to facilitate sharing information that does not require a formal memorandum of understanding. The distribution list now includes:

- State agencies including the Texas Veterans Leadership Program, Veterans Commission, and Workforce Commission

- Federal agencies including the Job Connection Education Program and Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

- Military installations and staff including Fort Hood, Fort Bliss, Camp Mabry, Ellington Field, and ACAP center transition managers

- Veterans' service organizations including Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and Lone Star Veterans Association

The group is open and allows members to distribute information to others. It shares information on employment opportunities, individual requests for assistance, and upcoming events. Job leads shared through this group may be sent directly to individuals. This increases the likelihood that they will be received in time for job seekers to apply, whereas leads disseminated through a more formal process may be filled by the time that process is completed. Because the communication is unencumbered, organizations can share and respond to time-sensitive information more quickly and efficiently than they would in a more formal process. For example,

if a member posts about a need for support for a training session, other organizations might promptly offer meeting space, as well as help with recruiting and transporting participants.

3. Changes in partnerships over the grant period

Illinois and Texas saw the largest changes to their partnerships during the grant period. In Illinois, two instances of large-scale staff turnover took place. As a result of the second turnover (caused by a change in administration and a reduction in staff), the entire grant team left the agency. Because so much information had been exchanged via email and files were stored on individuals' computers, considerable knowledge, records, and momentum were lost. In Texas, the Veterans Commission, which was initially a partner to the grant, declined to participate in the one-year grant extension period. The refocusing guidance had been released and they were devoting considerable resources to determining how they needed to revamp their staffing, procedures, materials, and training to comply with it. The Veterans Commission did not feel that it had sufficient resources to devote to this project as well. As a result, the two staff members provided by Veterans Commission under the grant to work with separating members of the National Guard and Reserve were lost.

B. Outreach projects (Objective 2)

1. Social media strategies

Comprehensive social media strategy. All states were encouraged to develop a social media strategy under the grant and they did so with differing levels of sophistication and success. Illinois had the most robust and varied approach by far, and documented its effectiveness. The Illinois Department of Employment Security worked to increase its page rank through search engine optimization. It also hired a media buyer to place targeted advertising and track results. Google AdWords targeted employers and job seekers based on search terms entered by users and showed them text and links highlighting success stories of veterans who used IDES or partner services to gain employment. Banner ads were shown to individuals viewing content relevant to Army UCX claimants interested in jobs or to human resources and recruiting professionals. "TrueView" was used to run an IDES advertising video before YouTube videos that are popular with the targeted audience. Charges were only incurred if the viewer watched at least 30 seconds of the video. Targeted ads were also shown to Facebook and LinkedIn users with certain interest and geographic characteristics. Additionally, ads were placed on multiple websites frequented by Army veterans. The inherent structure of the sites meant that Facebook advertising directed viewers to the IDES Facebook site, while the other modes led to the veterans landing page on the Illinois Job Link (IJL) site. The IDES Facebook site gained over 10,000 likes during the year-long advertising campaign, with a high likelihood that they came from the target audience and were a result of the campaign. The campaign also resulted in more than 94,000 click-throughs to the veterans' landing page on IllinoisJobLink.com and more than 269,000 views of the YouTube outreach video, more than 39,000 (14.5 percent) of which were of the complete video. Illinois spent $136,858 on advertising that yielded more than 28.7 million impressions, a rate that it believed was in line with industry averages and a good return on investment.

Facebook. All of the grantees included Facebook pages in their social media outreach; for some grantees, it was their only use of social media. The grantees took an interesting variety of approaches to their pages. Illinois, Georgia, and Texas each chose to have a single Facebook

page for their departments of employment security, labor, or workforce rather than adding an additional page for veterans. Illinois did this to enable veterans to see everything, not only veteran-related content. Posts to the pages were frequent and included hiring event notices, local labor market updates, newsletters for workers and employers, introductions of new staff, descriptions of new grant and training opportunities, and updates about new resources. Site users interacted with the pages by forwarding and liking articles. These videos included monthly job market reports as well as reports on topics such as summer job search, UI fraud, career center services, and employer profiles. The Texas Veterans Commission and Leadership Program each had their own Facebook pages. The Veterans Commission page was particularly dynamic, with hash-tagging, invitations to social events, and posts encouraging veterans to recollect particular experiences or guess the identity of a famous veteran.

Web-pages. North Carolina chose to create a veteran-specific Division of Workforce Services page. The page has two or three posts per month, usually providing notice of job fairs or stand downs, which are events geared towards providing homeless veterans with supplies and services. The Georgia Departments of Labor and Economic Development collaborated on the development of the Operation: Workforce site, geared towards military personnel and veterans, under the grant.

Mobile applications. North Carolina and Texas also used mobile applications to connect with job seekers. NC Works is a mobile app provided by Geographic Solutions, the vendor that runs North Carolina's employment services website. The app provides much of the same job search functionality as the website, with additional features such as using GPS to show job listings near the user's present location. Texas also has a mobile app that provides access to national and local hotlines, veterans' benefits, and the Texas veterans' portal, which is a site that brings together content from five Texas agencies including the Workforce Commission and the Veterans Commission.

2. Other outreach strategies

Targeting particular populations for various forms of outreach and follow-up was a priority for several of the states. Illinois was able to generate lists of veterans by demographic characteristics, disability status, geography, and other variables and use them for sending invitations to job fairs, email blasts, and the like. The Illinois grantee requested an enhancement to the IJL workforce system so that when people signed up for an event, their characteristics would be automatically attached to their registration. Although this enhancement had not been implemented by the end of the grant, it would have enabled Illinois to follow up with veterans after an event and to match types of contact with participation to determine which approaches are effective. Business services coordinators use the IJL system to identify and contact veterans whose qualifications match job openings that will be represented at upcoming hiring events. The system included a new feature—an indicator that is automatically placed on the accounts of veterans who meet the criteria for eligibility for intensive services—to aid targeted outreach.

In Texas state staff conducted a monthly mass email, letter, and telephone campaign to more than 1,000 Army UCX claimants. Texas is implementing a new policy in response to refocusing guidelines, however. Rather than conducting outreach to all UCX claimants, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program representatives (DVOPs) now only focus on those who are active in the Work in Texas system. A regional manager reaches out to all Army UCX claimants drawing UCX

from Texas but living in a different state to check on their status and find out what assistance he can provide. The concern is that there may be gaps in services to these individuals because they are registered in and receive UCX from one state but live in another state. The grant director identifies this small group of about 20 individuals by running a search for UCX claimants with addresses in other states and finding people on that list who are also in Work in Texas. The Texas Workforce Commission planned to try connecting with veterans outside of Texas who are not UCX claimants through marketing in *Military Times*, which is distributed in post exchanges worldwide and online. The Workforce Commission is also working with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation on a nationwide initiative to link all state veterans' pages together.

Texas has a robust, easily usable system for tracking participants and running reports to target outreach efforts. Staff can readily search for participants who meet sets of characteristics and do so often. Before a hiring fair at Fort Hood, for example, over 1,300 invitation letters were sent to UCX claimants from all branches of service who lived within 200 miles. Over time, staff have found that this is a reasonable catchment area for hiring fairs; the letters are relatively inexpensive to send and staff have confirmed that at least some veterans have traveled long distances to the fairs. Although the Texas Veterans Leadership Program generated the list, the letters were sent by the UI department, as having that logo on the envelope and letterhead would encourage recipients to read it. The data can also be used to target services to veterans in other categories, such as women or those with transportation issues.

The North Carolina Department of Commerce (NCDC) developed an electronic, veteran-focused newsletter called NC Veterans at Work, which was released in the fall and winter of 2014 and the spring and summer of 2015. The newsletter focused on subjects such as the veterans' unemployment rate compared with the civilian unemployment rate, jobs in which veterans can use their transferrable skills for civilian careers, jobs in demand for veterans with security clearances, career resource information specifically tailored for veterans, and other veterans' benefits and services. Due to restrictions on bulk emailing, North Carolina recruited several organizations and local AJCs to distribute the newsletter in addition to linking to it from the main commerce web page and posting it on the workforce solutions veterans' Facebook page.

North Carolina also used grant funds to publish and distribute the latest edition of the NC4Vets Resource Guide through a memorandum of understanding with the North Carolina Division of Veteran Affairs. The guide contains contact information for AJCs and lists of services provided by state and federal agencies. It was posted on the NCDC website and veteran's Facebook page and is also being distributed in hard copy by AJCs, the National Guard, Vocational Rehabilitation, community colleges, and Department of Veterans Affairs staff at Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune. Over 150,000 guides were printed using grant funds.

During the grant period, North Carolina sent over 6,350 letters and emails to Army UCX customers directing them to the nearest AJC for transition assistance, and to NC Works Online for registration, self-service job search, and career information. These letters and emails were produced automatically based on partial registrations generated from UCX claims. North Carolina planned to cease sending these letters at the end of the grant. The impact of these letters and emails is unknown, but the grantee believed at a minimum that they benefitted Army UCX claimants by increasing awareness of services.

C. Service delivery strategies (Objective 3)

1. Military skills translation tools

Across the board, the four grantees reported that translating military skills and experiences to civilian terms and applying them to civilian employment opportunities was of the utmost importance. This has typically been accomplished by combining staff knowledge—mostly that of veterans representatives—with electronic resources such as O*Net, military.com, Army COOL, and general web searches. Several states have prioritized providing military-to-civilian skill translation resources on state workforce services websites and make them readily available to job seekers who are not working directly with staff. Grant teams noted that this capability is especially important to successfully implement the refocusing guidelines.

Texas has developed in-house software that translates military occupational specialties (MOS) codes and ratings to civilian occupations in Texas Skills to Work. The software also uses collateral duties, schools, and certifications to suggest other occupations and identify appropriate job titles within a field. Not all occupations had been robustly populated with skills and job titles in the software as some, such as infantryman (11B) or fire support specialist (13F), do not have readily identifiable civilian counterparts. An employer site will allow employers to translate their civilian job postings to military terms and MOS codes and to translate military resumes into civilian terms. The grant team indicated that groups of employers asked for this functionality so that they could target their job postings to particular military personnel and be more accessible to veterans. Rather than have the veterans figure out what kinds of civilian jobs they might be suited for, employers wanted to know what types of military occupations involved their required skill sets and recruit individuals with those MOS.

Georgia and Illinois have both adopted off-the-shelf resume creation software packages, Burning Glass and Resunate, respectively, which feature a skill translation component. Burning Glass offers a bundle of components that are being rolled out gradually on the Operation: Workforce site, which is specifically for veterans. Military terminology and MOS codes are translated into potential civilian language and phrases from which veterans can choose when building a resume. Resunate, which uses semantic-derived focusing to make an applicant's resume more closely match the job posting, is available through Illinois's IJL system.

North Carolina has contracted with Geographic Solutions as the provider for its NC Works website. The site contains a feature that allows users to search on MOS codes and locate a civilian equivalent; the grant team was considering the addition of more service codes.

a. Resume creation

All four states emphasized the importance of creating an effective civilian resume, and most stressed that individuals need to develop multiple resumes tailored to the various positions they apply for. The resumes transitioning service members develop in TAP are generally not considered to be very high quality, or are viewed more as master resumes that would be used to develop an application-specific resume than as what one would submit to an employer. Because resume development is time consuming and needs to be done repeatedly to tailor the resume for particular applications and to keep it up to date, several states are interested in resume development software that will allow customers to develop quality resumes whenever and wherever necessary, with little or no staff assistance.

As mentioned above, Georgia has adopted Burning Glass for this purpose and is rolling it out in three phases. The first phase, which is complete, layered the account creation, resume development, and career explorer components for job seekers and staff into the Operation: Workforce site for veterans. The software also rates the quality of the match between the resume a job seeker has created and a particular job listing, and tells job seekers what skills others who have been successful in getting that kind of job have and what kinds of skills they need to obtain. As mentioned above, it includes a military-to-civilian skill translation feature. The second and third phases will enable employers to enter job orders and conduct searches; these phases will come on line in 2015 after the database has enough job seekers to ensure that employers' searches will yield appropriate matches and employers will not be disappointed and decide not to use the system. After phase 2 is rolled out, Georgia will retire its legacy system and all customers will use the new system.

Resunate, which is used in Illinois, creates customized resumes aligned to specific job postings that are of interest to users. When a job seeker uses the "auto focus feature," Resunate uses semantic technology (based on word associations rather than simply on keywords) to rank concepts in the resume to align with the job posting, remove irrelevant information, and format it in accordance with the requirements of that posting. The "JobFocus Score" tool shows how well a resume aligns with a posting. Job seekers can save multiple resumes optimized for various jobs in the system. Illinois initially focused on deploying the job seeker component of the software and testing it with veteran customers. Customers received one-on-one demonstrations and workshops and provided positive feedback on the program's overall ease of use, user-friendly resume templates, and quantitative evaluation of individual resumes.

b.   Skills gap analysis

In North Carolina, the NC Works site provided by Geographic Solutions allows job seekers to compare the kinds of jobs they are interested in pursuing and perform a self-analysis to find out if their skill sets match those required by employers. If this search determines that the job seeker falls short in some area, it provides information on how many years of experience are needed and what specific skills the person should develop, as well as the closest school that offers training in these skills. Job seekers can also find out the average wage available in various occupations, how many other users of the system have the skills and experience for a particular job, and which other employers are hiring for similar positions. Employers can use the functionality to find out how many job seekers meet their requirements, and obtain a list of them. Employers can also identify cut points—for example, an employer may choose to have individuals with 85 percent of the skills required for a position included on the match list.

2.   On-site staff

Texas hired four staff members to work with transitioning service members on base, as early in their transition as possible. Two worked at Fort Bliss and Fort Hood for the duration of the project and two worked with National Guard and Reservists at Camp Mabry and Ellington Field until June 2014. These staff provided transition services to transitioning service members, including connections with AJC staff in other areas for those who would be relocating, and job search, training assistance, and referrals to local AJCs for those remaining in the area. The staff participated in hiring fairs, promoted their services in high traffic areas, and held office hours. As word of mouth spread about the staff's presence, the number of transitioning service members

they saw increased to current levels of several hundred per month. They reported that many of the individuals they worked with were extremely grateful for the assistance because they were unaware of the resources available and had numerous questions, despite having attended TAP.

Georgia is participating in a DOL initiative in which DVOP staff provide services to individuals in Warrior Transition Units (WTUs) early in their transition. Depending on space available and the structure of the unit, the DVOP may be stationed there full time, visit a few days a week, or have customers referred by the WTU who come to the AJC. The goals are to provide customized information sooner rather than later.

3.   Reemployment Eligibility Assessment

Both North Carolina and Georgia observed benefits of the Reemployment Eligibility Assessment (REA) program[5] for UI claimants who participated in it and decided to use this grant to expand the program to better serve UCX claimants.

North Carolina has a two-faceted approach to REA. In an REA complete service, staff provide customers with an initial assessment, labor market information, an eligibility assessment, and referrals to reemployment or training services, potentially spanning multiple visits. An Employability Assessment Interview (EAI) complete service is similar but occurs in one visit. The North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions and the Division of Employment Security launched the EAI program in March 2014. Through it, all UI recipients receive a letter shortly after receiving their first benefit payment saying that they are required to report in person to an AJC and to register in NC Works Online. Benefits are discontinued for those who fail to report to the AJC for a scheduled appointment. Expansion of this program to UCX claimants means that they, too, are required to report in person to an AJC. North Carolina staff perceive that this requirement has significantly increased the number of UCX claimants receiving services from AJCs The grant team reported that from March 2013, when it began grant activities, through the end of the grant, over 1,300 Army UCX customers received the REA complete service and approximately 1,500 job development contacts were made to Army UCX customers. Since March 2014, when EAI began, over 450 Army customers received the EAI complete service.

As part of the Army UCX grant, Georgia pilot tested directing all UCX claimants, including Army, to the REA program as it provides targeted, intensive services and case management, with the goal of quickly connecting claimants to the workforce. As required by REA, claimants are randomly assigned into comparison and participant groups. The participant group, as well as UCX claimants with significant barriers to employment, receive intensive REA services and those in the comparison group receive routine workforce services. Georgia reported that from February 1, 2013 through June 30, 2015, there were 419 UCX REA referrals for all military branches. Of the 419 referrals 358 customers were randomly selected as mandatory participants in REA; 154 of the mandatory participants were from the Army. An outcomes analysis will be presented in a later report as administrative data become available.

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[5] As required by REA, claimants referred to REA are organized into comparison and participant groups, with participants receiving intensive REA services and those in the comparison group receiving routine workforce services.

Both Georgia and North Carolina planned to implement Unemployment Insurance Program Letter (UIPL) 13-15 (DOL 2015); this UIPL provides guidelines for fiscal year 2015 UI reemployment services and eligibility assessment (RESEA) grants.

4. Troops to Trucks and similar programs

Troops to Trucks is an employment initiative to help service members with military commercial motor vehicle driving experience expedite their entry into civilian employment in the transportation industry through waiver of the driving portion of the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) test. States may use the federal requirements for determining eligibility or add other criteria. They may also choose to make other provisions, such as offering the written test on base and giving assistance in completing the medical certification and fingerprinting. Veterans' training and experience in the military determine the type of CDL they receive.

Georgia and Texas are both participating in Troops to Trucks. In Georgia, CDL certification for qualified service members is expedited by certifying military installations as third-party CDL testers, allowing after-hours access to state certification sites, and creating on-base customer service centers in addition to waiving the driving test. As noted earlier, Georgia is also working to market Troops to Trucks to companies such as Coca-Cola that hire large numbers of drivers.

The Texas grant director reported that insurance companies do not recognize years of military truck driving experience or that the military license is a Class A CDL when setting rates. Thus, firms that hire veteran drivers with considerable experience may be paying insurance rates on them comparable to those paid on new, inexperienced drivers. Additionally, many trucking companies want their drivers to have attended one of the commercial trucking schools, even if they already have a license. These schools generally accept GI Bill funding for tuition, but some require students to cover lodging during the course, which is often not affordable to unemployed veterans. The grant team has been coordinating with schools, bases, and others to try to resolve these issues.

5. Credentialing programs and reciprocity

Both Georgia and Texas have been looking for ways to transfer military credentials and certifications to ones that are used and accepted in civilian employment. Two years ago, the Georgia state legislature passed a bill that would count military experience toward licenses in five construction-related fields: (1) electrical contractor class 1, (2) journeyman plumber, (3) conditioned air contractor class 1, (4) residential light commercial contractor, and (5) utility foreman. Georgia also felt that health care would be a likely sector to target going forward.

Central Texas College built a database tracking the military certifications and trainings that are honored in pursuit of civilian certifications. Veterans can consult this database to estimate how long they will need to be in school and what classes they will need to take in order to obtain various outcomes. The grant director also described a state college program for military medics to receive civilian certifications. He reported that it has been difficult to convince all schools to count military experience toward course credit; this was described as greed by some schools for GI Bill funds. In addition, the grant team has found that many military medics would like to switch to different fields. The Army is piloting three programs at Fort Hood that will allow soldiers to gain certifications in auto mechanics, pipefitting, and in Microsoft programs.

6. Other service delivery strategies

AJCs throughout Illinois hold monthly workshops for veterans on topics such as resume preparation, job search techniques, and networking skills. Illinois indicated that 30-minute skill-building and employability sessions are useful for people who are not interested in, or cannot attend longer trainings. These sessions are being held in the week before veterans' hiring events and have focused on skills translation, mock interviews, and boosting moral. Some partners have also conducted sessions on site the day of the hiring events.

North Carolina developed and implemented training on service delivery to UCX claimants for AJC staff, with additional training, materials, and outreach resources provided to AJC staff in areas with high concentrations of veterans. The new rules and responsibilities are shifting the AJCs' approach to outreach and follow-up with veterans. Although not implemented, Texas recommended working with the military to allow transitioning service members who have obtained civilian employment to separate early to begin work.

Some of Georgia's career center and WIA staff have global career development facilitator certification. Because Georgia has found that credentialed staff are more effective than noncredentialed staff at identifying and meeting customers' needs, the grant funded training for key frontline case managers. Staff receive training for certification in assessment testing and career development services on a rolling basis. Georgia hopes all staff will complete the process, which will continue after the grant period as funds are available.

D. Data-sharing projects (Objective 4)

1. Automated UCX billing

As required by Training and Employment Notice 20-12 (DOL 2013), the quarterly UCX payment process was converted to an electronic file transfer to the Army Human Resources Command at Fort Knox, Kentucky. The data exchange has been automated to send initial claims data to the Army through a secure file transfer protocol. This transfer includes the name, Social Security number, claim date, benefits paid, and reason for separation fields present in the paper billing statement and was enhanced to include fields for address, email, and telephone number. The Army's Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis at West Point worked with grantees on this exchange. The two primary goals were to improve the UCX billing process and to expand the Army's capacity to analyze long-term veteran outcomes analysis. After receipt from the states, the Army passes the full data set along to the standard UCX billing process.

2. Georgia/Army data sharing

Like other states, Georgia profiles UI claimants, including those receiving UCX, for their likelihood of exhausting benefits; this helps identify claimants who need targeted, additional services to obtain employment before they exhaust their benefits. In an effort to improve the profiling model, Georgia is sending the Army data sets on UCX recipients, which the Army is merging with its pre-separation data. The Army will use this merged data set to address questions regarding UCX claimant service delivery and outcomes, including questions about Georgia's profiling model. Mathematica will also use this data set to address research questions related to the Army UCX Claimants Initiative; this analysis will form the basis of our final study report.

3. States' efforts to obtain DD-214 data for outreach and service delivery

Although most of the grantee states would like access to DD-214 data on transitioning service members, only Texas can currently access the data and use them for outreach and service delivery. Two other states are actively pursuing paths to obtaining DD-214 data.

Each military branch sends form DD-214 to the Veterans Commission if the soldier's home of record is in Texas. A contractor receives a stripped version, which it scans and sends an image of to the Texas Veterans Leadership Program database. Staff use the database to verify veterans' service for Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC) conditional certification and for other veteran-related programs, and to provide DD-214 copies to veterans who do not have one. The director of the Texas Veterans Leadership Program also uses the database to predict the number of veterans who will return to the state in the coming year and plan resource allocation. Additionally, the database is used for sending welcome home outreach letters to transitioning service members returning to Texas.

The Georgia grantee does not currently have access to DD-214 data but is attempting to obtain this through its data-sharing partnership with the Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis. If successful, Georgia would use these data for UCX claims and WOTCs. The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) receives a report on transitioning service members with Illinois addresses of record on their DD-214 forms. IDVA does not currently share this contact information with IDES, but the two organizations are discussing that possibility. The North Carolina grantee does not currently receive DD-214 data and is not pursuing doing so.

E. Reinforcing implementation of priority of service (Objective 5)

The grantee states have been implementing priority of service for some time and therefore they feel familiar with it and comfortable that they have developed effective procedures for identifying and prioritizing eligible individuals. It was an integral part of their activities already and so they did not need to place much emphasis on it as a part of the grant.

The states described their methods for identifying POS-eligible individuals and providing them priority. These methods were in line with those prescribed. Staff may identify people eligible for POS in various ways, including asking them at the front desk, noting their responses on paper or online sign-in or registration forms, or through their statements to a staff member. Eligible veterans who are identified by these means are informed of their right to priority, either by a staff member, printed materials, or online information.

Much of the discussion of implementing POS centered on actions stemming from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) refocusing guidelines in Training and Employment Guidance Letters 19-13 (DOL 2014b) and 20-13 (DOL 2014a). These guidelines describe changes in who can be served by veterans representatives, potentially expanding the extent to which general staff serve veterans. As a result, several states have provided additional training to staff in areas such as the roles of various types of staff members, handling intake and customer flow, and serving veterans. The source, recipients, and extent of the training have varied by state.

The National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) came to Atlanta to present a two-day training to all Georgia JVSG staff on the new guidelines. Webinars and memos have explained

other process and system enhancements. Since that training, the attendees have been providing training on the topic to staff in their localities, to ensure that Wagner-Peyser staff correctly understand and can implement POS, know how to identify significant barriers to employment and refer veterans with them to DVOPs, and can communicate well with customers and understand the needs of veterans.

NVTI has also provided training in Illinois, primarily to JVSG staff. Two managers attended to learn about the roles of non-JVSG staff, POS, how to conduct outreach to veterans, and how their staff and that of partners should be serving veterans in the new consolidated office environment. DVOP staff who attended the training have been providing training on the new procedures and materials to other staff members.

Texas Veterans Commission staff have long conducted regular trainings on POS and serving veterans for Texas Workforce Commission and other partner staff. The Veterans Commission staff themselves participate in a regimen of NVTI trainings throughout their career. Texas Veterans Leadership Program and Workforce Commission staff have been working together to develop new procedures to implement the refocusing guidance. All Veterans Leadership Program staff (approximately 20), as well as area board members, received NVTI training on refocusing related changes, though there has been a lag in training all Employment Services staff due to their numbers.

In North Carolina, several sessions were conducted to familiarize JVSG and other staff with the refocusing guidance. Wagner-Peyser and other state staff will need training as they will provide the majority of services to veterans, but the training had not yet been developed.

States have also enhanced their processes and forms to ensure that POS is provided and that customers see the appropriate types of staff members. Georgia modified its Veteran/Eligible Spouse Priority of Service Information Sheet (GDOL-3404) to better identify veterans including those with significant barriers to employment and POS-eligible veterans. The grant team members reported that this form has been extremely helpful; it is a required document for use inside the state and the director for veterans' employment and training has requested it on behalf of other states in the region.

Illinois has revised its guidelines, job descriptions, performance reviews, and policy and procedure documents to ensure they align with POS and refocusing guidance in TEGLs 19-13 and 20-13. Illinois also improved its triage form, which is structured around the significant barriers to employment and other criteria in the guidance, as well as the current poverty level, and which is used to decide whether a veteran should see an Employment Services staff member or a DVOP.

A new triage tool has been developed in Texas to ensure proper identification of POS-eligible veterans and of veterans who may be served by DVOPs, as well as correct routing of all customers.

F. Tracking and reporting of pilot outcomes (Objective 6)

A key objective of the grants was that states would track services and outcomes of Army UCX claimants served by the grants, and report this information, along with other grant outputs

and outcomes, in quarterly reports. Although the grantees added flags and icons to better identify Army UCX claimants in their workforce systems, quantitative reporting on grant outputs and outcomes was extremely limited.

1.   UCX flag

A UCX flag was added to the computer system used by the workforce system in each of the grantee states for participant tracking. These flags enable staff to easily identify claimants when the claimants call or come in for services. Staff also use the flags to find UCX claimants in the system to send them outreach letters, invitations to job fairs, notifications about workshops, and the like. Using zip codes, they can target such outreach geographically. Combining the flag with other information allows staff to conduct outreach to particular groups of claimants such as women, those with service-connected disabilities, and those interested in particular occupations. Similarly, the flags can be used to see what services were provided to particular groups, how many claimants attended various events, benefit duration and amount, and what kinds of outcomes the claimants had.

In some states, the flag is specifically for Army UCX while in others there is a flag for UCX and a separate branch indicator. The latter approach provides more flexibility and longer-term usability, in that all claimants or those for any branch or combination of branches can be identified. The flag is generated from the employer account number on the UI claim record or other identifiers that reflect that the person is a UCX claimant.

2.   Data dashboard in Texas

Texas developed a data dashboard for Workforce Commission managers that displays 10 to 12 high-level measures on UCX claimants. The dashboard includes the number of new UCX claims each month; average UCX claim duration in weeks; the number of claimants completing TAP, receiving outreach, or receiving staff-assisted services; the number entering employment in the quarter after services based on wage records; and the number of WOTCs related to those who found employment. Having these measures readily available enables managers to actively monitor this group and promptly note any trends in the figures.

III. PROMISING PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Identifying common challenges and promising practices

Common challenges are aspects of the organizations, relationships, or grant that hindered the development or execution of grant strategies. Promising practices, as described in this report, meet the objectives of the grant, are innovative, have gained traction with one or more grantees, may be feasibly pursued without significant known barriers to implementation, and have a strong potential for sustainability and replicability. A practice must meet all of these criteria to be considered promising. There are many things grantees appear to have done very well and should continue doing, even if they are not by this definition considered promising practices.

B. Common challenges

Grantees encountered several common challenges to grant planning and implementation. These challenges were partially structural and will continue to be obstacles for any project until solutions to them are developed. Others were unique to this project or those individuals involved in it and will not necessarily occur in future projects. However, they should be noted for awareness and amelioration of similar situations in the future, as necessary.

Data sharing. In all states, overcoming the legal and data security issues that surround sharing data across agencies and programs was a major hindrance. A number of good ideas that would allow for early contact with transitioning service members and targeted outreach were foiled by the resources needed to negotiate data sharing agreements, or the inability to share data expediently or at all. Some such ideas were dismissed out of hand because of known obstacles. Others were explored in various depths before being ultimately put aside.

Partnerships. Sustaining robust partnerships between state workforce agencies and military organizations also proved difficult in many cases. Military involvement in grant implementation was strong at the outset, with individuals from a number of organizations participating in calls with grantees and discussing what their partnerships might entail. This involvement waned, and ultimately only Georgia and the Army, after spending much time and effort in negotiating data sharing agreements and with extensive support from Mathematica and DOL, developed a data exchange. Grantee-specific partnerships with the military were also affected by changes in staffing and leadership. The Transition Center Manager on Fort Bliss early in the project was very amenable to participation, providing office space to the state staff member stationed there and allowing presentations to be made to classes of transitioning service members. When this position was restaffed due to normal turnover, access and priorities changed, and a relationship with the new individual had to be developed to work toward regaining the lost ground.

Staffing. In several states, staffing issues were a hindrance to grant activities. These issues were evident within both grantee and partner organizations. One state would have benefited from having a staff member leading the project who had a deeper understanding of the organization, activities, and systems of the departments in the state that were or could have been involved in the project. This approach may have led to the development of more innovative ideas and expansion of promising practices that arose during the grant period. In another state, large-scale staffing turnovers occurred twice during the grant period, due to reorganization and a change in administration. In the first instance, the turnover occurred in a division the grant team was

working with, resulting in that project being put on hold until a new division staff settled in. In the second instance, the entire grant team suddenly, and without warning, left the state agency due to a change in administration. This situation caused considerable disruption, as grant activity was on hold until new staff were identified for participation and brought up to speed on the initiative by the evaluation team and DOL. Because of the transition speed, the completeness of the staff turnover, and emails and project documents apparently being stored on individual computers that were no longer accessible, there was little internal documentation of ongoing activities that could be resumed, and grant activity largely halted partway through the third year of the grant.

Innovation. An unusual aspect of this grant was that the funds were available for a relatively broad range of activities to be determined by the grantee. Rather than prescribing how grant funds could be spent, grantees were tasked by DOL with finding innovative projects that met the objectives of the initiative. Three of the four grantees generated and implemented acceptable ideas on which to spend the majority of their grant funds; the fourth grantee spent less than 40 percent of its funding. Across grantees, nearly $600,000 or 20 percent of grant funding remained unspent at the end of the three year grant period. Even the state that spent nearly all of its funds reported some challenges with the level of creativity permitted by the grant, including convincing others in the state that it truly did have free reign to innovate. Nevertheless, grantees were appreciative of the opportunity to pursue innovative ideas for improving veterans' reemployment approaches.

C. Promising practices and recommendations for future research

A number of promising practices arose from the strategies and activities described in Chapter II and discussed in further detail in the grantee-specific appendices. Here we list those that are particularly promising or most actionable for further piloting and evaluation.

1. **Social media.** Illinois developed a social media campaign that covered multiple platforms and directed targeted viewers to well-designed resources for further information and interaction. Metrics were tracked and showed the success of the campaign in expanding outreach to veterans.

2. **Military skills translation tools.** Effectively communicating to a civilian employer, both on a resume and in an interview, the skills and abilities developed in the military was uniformly cited as a critical need. To address this requirement, Texas and Georgia have developed or purchased software that will allow veterans and transitioning service members to work independently or with staff to not only translate their military occupations and skills into civilian language but also to better understand the range of civilian occupations that might suit them. Additionally, employers may use this software to identify military occupations that fit their hiring needs and create job postings using military language that targets veterans and transitioning service members.

3. **Resume development software.** Presenting a high quality, civilian style resume to an employer is an important step toward getting hired, but military members are accustomed to resumes of a very different format and content. An individual's resume should be tailored to the job to which he or she is applying, a time-intensive task. To assist with this process, both Georgia and Illinois have purchased resume creation and optimization software that will aid

in tailoring a resume to a posting of interest. Both states tested the software with veterans, received positive feedback, and deployed it to them first when the decision was made to purchase it.

4. **On-site staff.** Through this grant, Texas has employed staff to initiate contact with service members as early in their transition process as possible, connecting them to available services, informing them of paths to employment, and assisting them with resume creation and job search. Through another initiative, DVOP staff in Georgia are serving members of Warrior Transition Units. Both of these activities take personalized services directly to customers, connecting with them as early as possible, to accelerate and ease the transition from the military to civilian employment, and minimize UCX claims in the process.

5. **Reemployment Eligibility Assessment program.** Both North Carolina and Georgia observed positive benefits of their REA programs for the UI recipients who participated and used grant funds to expand the program to UCX claimants. It is too early for data to measure the benefits of this change, however, though both states plan to pursue this analysis.

6. **Integration with TAP.** There was wide agreement across grantees about the importance of reinstituting some form of integration with the TAP program to allow state workforce agencies to inform participants about local services and how to access them. Grantees have been attempting to find ways of either speaking to classes or obtaining class lists that can be used for outreach. On-base state staff in Texas employed under this grant have tried to achieve this objective by positioning themselves at program sites in hallways near the classrooms. Through a separate pilot, staff members in Georgia have been allowed to present in TAP sessions; North Carolina also described the benefits of providing localized information to TAP participants.

7. **Data sharing and use of DD-214 data.** Although data sharing between agencies is widely acknowledged as beneficial to transitioning service members and veterans because it allows for earlier, more tailored outreach and service provision, privacy and data access concerns make sharing very difficult. Georgia and the Army have worked together to create a merged data file of pre-separation military data and UCX claimant data to evaluate, and potentially improve, Georgia's exhaustion model and to address research questions about transitioning service members and veterans that require both military and workforce data. Texas employs procedures that create an image database of veterans' DD-214 forms with an address of record in Texas. The database is used for outreach, resource allocation, and program-eligibility verification.

8. **Form and process creation and revision.** Georgia, Illinois, and Texas have all enhanced intake forms, triage tools, signage, processes, and/or policies in response to the refocusing guidance. This initiative ensures that veterans with significant barriers to employment are correctly identified and routed to services and that veterans and others eligible for priority of service continue to be properly identified and served. The degree of clarity of definitions, eligibility, and transparency of process in these materials and procedures helps to counter or prevent veterans from feeling that earned services are being withheld, a sentiment some have expressed during the transition following refocusing.

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APPENDIX A

GEORGIA GRANT ACTIVITIES

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A. Synopsis of the state's plan

Georgia's plan identified several strategies to address the three major goals and the seven objectives prescribed by DOL for the Army UCX Claimants Initiative. Georgia also expressed interest in enhancing existing activities that aligned with the overarching goals of the initiative. This section briefly summarizes the strategies and activities in the original plan and their status at the end of the grant. Georgia incorporated other activities into its grant, described in Section B.

1. Profiling/evaluation to target employment services

UI claimants, including those receiving UCX, are profiled for reemployment services and the likelihood of exhaustion of benefits; this process helps identify claimants who need additional targeted services to obtain employment before they exhaust their benefits. The Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) and the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) are sending the Army unemployment compensation claims, weekly payments, wage records, Wagner-Peyser, and WIA data on UCX recipients and separating service members. The Army will merge these data with military data for the same individuals; in separate reports, both the Army and Mathematica will use the merged data set to address research questions related to Georgia's profiling model as well as to UCX claimant service delivery and outcomes.

2. Troops to Trucks

The Governor's Office of Workforce Development (GOWD), part of GDEcD since April 2014, established with the Georgia Department of Driver Services (GDDS), the U.S. Army, the Army Reserves, and the Georgia National Guard a Troops to Trucks reciprocal CDL program for military service members. This program expedites CDL certification for qualified service members by employing military installations as third-party CDL testers, allowing after-hours access to GDDS sites, and creating on-base customer service centers. The plan was to enable service members in the transportation field to more quickly and easily move into positions in the civilian transportation sector upon separation from military service. Georgia had reported that no grant funding was earmarked for this effort.

3. Web portal development

GOWD/GDEcD led the development of a web portal that presents GDEcD, GDOL, the Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS), and other resources on one site; this consolidation enables job seekers and employers to learn about services offered to veterans in a more unified, coherent way. The site is part of the "Hire a Georgia Veteran" campaign, which seeks pledges from employers to hire UCX veterans. Veterans can learn from one source about the services the partner agencies offer and access a list of veteran-friendly employers. Initial components of the site were launched in conjunction with Georgia's November 8, 2012, Mega-Event for veterans.

4. REA services for UCX claimants

The Georgia grant initially included support for veterans' job fairs and hiring events, such as the November 2012 Mega-Event attended by representatives from workforce and employment services, technical and other colleges, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, Department of Veterans Affairs, GDVS, and other organizations. Such events educate employers about UCX, tax credits available for hiring veterans, and veterans' contributions to the workplace. The events

targeted employers with current openings, facilitated on-site interviews, and connected employers with the state's marketing teams and local employer committees. The hiring events continue under the sponsorship of other organizations. The state also originally planned to hire four staff members for the offices with the highest concentrations of customers receiving UCX. These staff members were to focus on providing services to UCX claimants and would work with LVERs, regional coordinators, employers, and local marketing representatives to develop employment opportunities for veterans. However, the grant team determined that a more efficient use of grant funds would be to direct all Army UCX claimants toward REA services, because that program had shown positive benefits for Georgia UI recipients receiving those services.

5. Staff training and certification

Some of Georgia's career center and WIA staff have global career development facilitator certification; many of the frontline staff do not. Because credentialed staff have been determined better able than their noncredentialed peers to identify and meet customers' needs, training was provided to key frontline case managers as part of the grant.

B. Update on plan objectives

This section describes the strategies and activities implemented by the grantee within the framework of the plan objectives; it also documents implementation challenges, proposed solutions, and next steps as of the end of the grant.

Objective 1: Develop a strong collaborative partnership among the UI system, the public workforce system, and the three components of the Army (regular, National Guard, and Army Reserves) to work on UCX projects

GDOL continues to work actively with the GDEcD on the Operation: Workforce website; GDOL indicated that the website is very beneficial and it is pleased with the partnership.

GDOL indicated that networking and partnering with different entities was not as intensive as it hoped, but it has been useful, and overall the network gave GDOL opportunities to expand resources. These initiatives include connecting with veterans through TAP and the TAP contractor. GDOL plans to continue developing those relationships but needs to review whether they require a structured steering committee.

Objective 2: Identify and implement innovative outreach projects

GDOL explored the development of videos for service members within a 180-day window (90 days before and 90 days after separation) to explain the UCX process and provide guidance on how to access assistance. This exploration was part of GDOL's discussions with the national Off-Base Transition Training team. VETS is operating the Off-Base Transition Training pilot in Georgia, Washington, and West Virginia; participants in the pilot workshops are registered in their states' AJCs. The pilot raised a concern about involving local workforce development staff in this kind of outreach effort.

The regional VETS representative asked Georgia to instead of producing videos participate in an off-base TAP pilot. The current TAP, which occurs before transition, lacks information on local workforce development resources. Following their separation, service members have a

general understanding that resources are available, but they do not always understand how to access them. GDOL believes that the situation improves when veterans are connected to AJCs; they access local resources and information, including labor market data and prevailing salaries, and AJC staff can help determine how to best fit veterans to available jobs. The sooner local information is available to the veteran, the easier the connection is to make.

The pilot consisted of a series of five TAP sessions in Augusta, Columbus, Macon, Savannah, and Cobb County. Once a contractor took over TAP, AJC staff stopped conducting the sessions. GDOL understands that the contractor delivers a structured curriculum consistent with the national program and allots no time for local information. In this pilot, GDOL staff were scheduled during one of the three days of TAP to provide information on how to access local workforce resources, as well as which employers were hiring locally and what skills they sought. GDOL hosted five TAP sessions during this pilot. GDOL staff were present for all three days of each session, presenting for two hours, answering questions, and providing additional information outside of the sessions. GDOL also captured participant information and registered transitioning service members in the system. GDOL's opinion was that the direct contact has proven much more helpful to transitioning service members than videos would have been.

The TAP contractor distributed a feedback form at the end of the pilot to identify customers' needs and wants. The responses indicated that transitioning service members want local information before separation, that it was extremely valuable to get this information during the TAP session, and that transitioning service members would like to engage in workforce services before separation. GDOL would like to expand this pilot to more locations across the state, and to know who attends TAP so that service members can be quickly connected to off-base services and begin conducting localized job searches.

Prior to this pilot, GDOL had very good relationships with individuals on some Georgia bases; GDOL would go on site when asked to provide information and participate in hiring fairs and other activities. However, this pilot marked the first time GDOL directly engaged with the TAP contractor.

Objective 3:   Develop service delivery strategies that enhance reemployment services and improve the employment outcomes of UCX claimants

a.   **Operation: Workforce**. GOWD/GDEcD designed and launched the Operation: Workforce website (http://www.operationworkforce.com/) as a centralized access portal for employers and UCX claimants to connect within the state and make job search resources and tools available. The site enables veterans to create a profile, upload a resume, and search and apply for job openings within the state of Georgia. It helps Georgia employers create profiles, post job listings, review job applicants, and search for qualified candidates. Operation: Workforce also enables veterans to translate their military occupation classifications into civilian occupations that best align with their skills and training.

From the site's launch through June 30, 2015, 4,034 job seekers and 904 employers created accounts on Operation: Workforce. The site posted 508 job listings, and users generated 1,691 job applications through the site. The Operation: Workforce figures are cumulative. Georgia promotes Operation: Workforce as part of its overall marketing to veterans and planned to

maintain the site after the grant. Changes to Operation: Workforce since its launch include a Newsroom feature and enabling staffing agencies and large employers to add jobs in bulk rather than individually. The grant team reported that information about the site is communicated at veterans' events and activities and in general information to potential UCX claimants who could benefit from the site.

Operation: Workforce and Georgia DOL's main site for job seekers (http://employgeorgia.com) are not integrated; they are independent sites with separate databases maintained by GDEcD and GDOL, but each links to the other website. Job seekers have a unique registration for each site. The job openings on the two sites are not necessarily shared, although both are updated nightly. GDOL is not familiar with the testing conducted on Operation: Workforce but noted anecdotally that veterans and employers have given positive feedback about the site.

GDOL understood that the MOS translator on Operation: Workforce links to the O*NET-SOC autocoder. An informal review of the site identified a small number of potential complications that GDOL thought might have to do with the O*NET codes in the background or with the search function conducting a text search of the entire listing. For example, the MOS search for 88M (heavy truck driver) yielded no CDL truck driver openings, but the current openings search showed several related openings, including one for a forklift driver. An MOS search for mortuary sciences (92M) returned no results, but a keyword search for "funeral" showed openings for a chemical plant operator with funeral leave benefits. GDOL indicated that the MOS search is beneficial to job seeking veterans and it has not received any complaints about the search process.

Georgia uses the Burning Glass tool (http://www.burning-glass.com/products/laborinsight-market-analysis/) for military skill translations on Operation: Workforce. GDOL is updating its site to likewise use the Burning Glass tool, which provides more self-service for customers. GDOL piloted Burning Glass in five locations in early October 2014 and tested it in AJCs. There were no connectivity or usage issues during the pilot rollout, so GDOL rolled the tool out statewide at the end of 2014. GDOL previously used only manual translation to build resumes.

Burning Glass translates military terminology and MOS codes into civilian language and phrases from which the veteran can choose when building a resume. Burning Glass rates the quality of the match between the resume and a particular job listing on a scale from 1 to 5. It also identifies for users the skills of successful applicants to similar job postings and recommends skills that users should obtain. When an individual begins to build a resume in Burning Glass he or she is also registering for services. When fully implemented, Burning Glass will serve as the registration system and the primary component of GDOL's skills translation efforts. GDOL is still operating dual systems; the grant team reported that GDOL will retire its legacy system when Burning Glass is fully implemented.

Burning Glass is an off-the-shelf software purchase with a different price for each of five modules. The application requires a one-time software purchase cost plus annual maintenance fees. GDOL needed to test connectivity, bandwidth, and related issues, and learn how to run analytics. States can choose to host the data themselves or have Burning Glass host, and GDOL reported that it is hosting its own data. Burning Glass does not offer access to the data for

marketing, and the contract may prohibit using data for those purposes. The grant team reported that Burning Glass is intuitive for job seekers to use and users have provided positive feedback.

At the end of the grant, veterans' staff across the state were sharing information about the site to engage other users. Phase 1 was well underway and included rollout of the Career Explorer for job seekers and a comparable component for staff to create resumes and accounts. Early on, GDOL was advised not to roll out Phase 2 for employers until the database registered 30,000 job seekers; the concern was that employers would not find anyone in a search and would decide not to use it. GDOL hoped to roll out Phase 2 by October 2015, as it had about 22,000 job seekers at the end of the grant. GDOL plans to alert select employers about the Phase 2 rollout and conduct a soft launch for about 20 to 30 days, followed by a full launch with marketing. GDOL anticipates that the biggest benefit of the system will come with the Phase 2 rollout, which will facilitate direct contact between employers and job seekers. GDOL expects that this improvement will further decrease UI durations; at the end of the grant, Georgia reported experiencing its seventh consecutive quarter with the lowest UI duration in the nation.

b. **Troops to Trucks.** The Troops to Trucks employment initiative aims to help service members who are within 90 days of leaving the military, or those who have left within 90 days, expedite their entry into civilian employment through the transportation industry. Service members with a Military 348 License may waive the driving portion of the CDL test offered at several GDDS locations throughout the state. From its inception through June 30, 2015, 166 total CDL licenses have been issued through Georgia's program; 35 of these were issued between April and June 2015.

The veteran's training and experience in the military determines the type of CDL he or she receives and a veteran can make three attempts to pass the written portion of the CDL test. GDOL reported that during May and June 2014, 13 veterans at one of the program sites made 39 attempts to receive CDLs. This finding suggests that veterans require multiple attempts to pass the written portion of the test. It would be useful to investigate challenges that the CDL test poses for service members and veterans, and how the program is addressing those challenges. It would also be useful to compare retesting rates of veterans with those of nonveterans. The grant team was uncertain whether Troops to Trucks would continue after the end of the grant.

The grant team reported that Georgia, Coca-Cola, and GDDS refined their plan to better market Troops to Trucks and better connect the Army with the major trucking companies. The Jobs for Veterans State Grant program was collaborating with these organizations and communicating the benefits of this opportunity. A partnership between GDEcD and private companies such as Coca-Cola and Home Depot supports employment of veterans. Positive marketing strategies were used by the AJCs and at veteran-centered events, including targeting community colleges.

GDOL reported positive feedback about the program and indicated a belief that it makes sense to explore applying this model to other industries with demands for military skills. Health care is a sector that the state will likely explore going forward. Georgia could investigate certifications that veterans can obtain quickly to expedite their reconnection to the civilian workforce. The state legislature passed a bill that would count military experience toward

licenses in five construction-related fields: electrical contractor class 1, journeyman plumber, conditioned air contractor class 1, residential light commercial contractor, and utility foreman.

c. **Refocusing guidelines.** Georgia is implementing the refocusing guidelines in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 19-13, which prescribes new roles and responsibilities for ES, DVOP, and LVER staff in serving veterans in AJCs. GDOL reported making great strides in implementing the guidelines but noted that the guidelines have affected veterans and it has been a significant effort to ensure a smooth transition from DVOPs to Wagner-Peyser staff for service provision to veterans. In early November 2014, the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) provided all veterans' staff in Atlanta with a two-day training on the guidelines; GDOL reported that this training went very well. DOL regional staff attended on the second day. Process and system enhancements were conveyed to staff through webinars and memos. GDOL reported conducting intensive training on priority of service and how to identify significant barriers to employment to ensure that veterans who meet these requirements are referred to DVOPs.

GDOL reported that its focus since the NVTI training has been on ensuring that Wagner-Peyser staff are able to communicate with customers and understand the needs of veterans. Toward the end of the grant, GDOL completed its annual veterans' audit, and the director for veterans' employment and training advised Georgia that it was the state with the highest and most effective delivery of intensive services in the region. GDOL indicated that the training and one-on-one staff focus has been effective.

To better identify veterans including those with significant barriers to employment (SBEs) and POS-eligible veterans, GDOL created an in-house document (3404) (incorporated into this appendix) that Wagner-Peyser staff use as an initial assessment at entry to the AJC. This form has been extremely helpful; it is a required document for use inside the state, and the director for veterans' employment and training has requested it on behalf of other states in the region. GDOL noted that some of the questions in the online registration form could be used to identify SBE criteria, such as age, but other SBEs, such as homelessness and low income, cannot be identified through online registration and require discussion with the veteran.

GDOL reported that overall staffing levels are acceptable for serving veterans. An initial allocation was made from the veterans program to fund six staff positions to work with six Warrior Transition Units (WTU), but no additional funds were provided beyond that first allocation. Some WTUs are closing, including Augusta; GDOL was waiting for feedback on additional closings from the regional office before preparing next year's plans. Staff were hired specifically for the WTU positions; if units are closed, GDOL will have to determine what to do with those staff members.

d. **REA services**. As part of its grant activities, Georgia had been supporting employment events and job fairs; GDOL also planned to hire four employment specialists and use its statistics group to support DVOPs and LVERs in conducting outreach and providing services to veterans. However, so many organizations sponsor these kinds of events on an ongoing basis that GDOL modified its Army UCX grant agreement to replace the job fairs and additional staff with intensive REA services for Army UCX claimants. GDOL considered REA a better use of the grant funding.

Georgia pilot-tested directing all UCX claimants, including Army, to the REA program. In combination with other services available to veterans, REA services provide more targeted and intensive services and case management with the intent to quickly connect claimants to the workforce. As required by REA, claimants referred to REA are organized into comparison and participant groups through random assignment. Selected participants receive intensive REA services, and those in the comparison group receive routine workforce services. Customers with significant barriers to employment receive intensive services as well.

The grant team reported that the random assignment program runs every night and that the number of customers assigned to the participant and comparison groups depends on the volume of Army UCX customers at the time of random assignment. The volume fluctuates, and the participant and comparison groups need not be equal in size. GDOL reported that from February 1, 2013 through June 30, 2015, there were 419 UCX REA referrals for all military branches. Of the 419 referrals 358 customers were randomly selected as mandatory participants in REA; 154 of the mandatory participants were from the Army. The remaining 61 referrals were not selected for REA participation; 25 of these customers were from the Army.

GDOL reported that it plans to implement UIPL 13-15, which describes UI reemployment services and eligibility assessment (RESEA) grants, by expanding staff in the pilot areas of the TAP initiative; the staff expansion will cover nine AJC offices. GDOL plans to focus on high-population areas with many claimants, so that the coverage of claimants will be strong despite that staffing will not be statewide. GDOL had submitted a RESEA grant proposal for this staff expansion and was hopeful this proposal would be approved.

e. **Training career development facilitators**. Georgia reported that it was training key frontline case managers to receive global career development facilitator certification; it found that credentialed staff are better able than their noncredentialed peers to identify and meet customers' needs. This certification is staggered with bronze, silver, and gold levels; training for certification in assessment testing and career development services is an ongoing process. Staff attend training on a rolling basis, and the grant team hoped all staff would complete the full process as funds are available after the grant ends. The team noted that the credential is considered significant and is highly valued.

f. **Military Treatment Facility Initiative.** Georgia participates in a military treatment facility initiative sponsored by DOL VETS that includes DVOP staff who work at or visit facilities, depending on space. These facilities might not be on-base. In addition, AJC staff frequently travel to bases around the state to market customized information to transitioning service members. GDOL reported seeing a level of frustration and confusion among veterans that could be mitigated by customizing their services.

This initiative is paired with WTUs, but agreements differ by location. Some staff are stationed full time with units, some visit a few days a week, and some have customers referred by WTUs who come to the AJC. The arrangement largely depends on the facilities. Where space is available, staff have a dedicated office; other locations still needed to resolve security issues related to facility access.

GDOL reported that communication was the biggest challenge to implementing the initiative. Georgia found that many commanders and others in charge initially had reservations because they had not heard about the initiative, and this delayed staff access to sites. Now that sites are familiar with the initiative they do not want staff to leave.

Objective 4:   Identify and implement innovative data-sharing projects

Georgia's data-sharing plans fell under the three broad components described below. Beyond these strategies, Georgia was not sharing data with other state agencies or partners as part of the Army UCX Claimants Initiative. However, GDOL reported that it is part of various workgroups with WIA, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, and community partners, that discuss how to increase data sharing and decrease duplication. The technology of data sharing is straightforward; however, MOUs and confidentiality agreements are the biggest challenges because each agency has unique data elements and privacy issues. GDOL is hopeful that progress can be made.

UCX billing component. GDOL automated its UCX billing and worked with the Army to also provide the billings data for research purposes. GDOL and the Army established a secure file transfer protocol connection. GDOL provided 10 years' worth of UCX data to the Army for testing and clearance following a record layout provided by the Army. Quarterly billing information was scheduled to be sent each quarter to the Military State Data Exchange System and the Army.

Profiling/evaluation component. Beginning in May 2014, GDOL collaborated with Mathematica, DOL, GDEcD, and the Army to review data needs related to evaluation of Georgia's profiling model and of veterans' workforce service use and employment, earnings, and UC claims experiences over time. Georgia data for this collaboration include UC claims and weekly payments, wage records, Wagner-Peyser, and Workforce Investment Act Standardized Record Data (WIASRD) service data. GDOL finalized MOUs and nondisclosure agreements with the Army and Mathematica and an intergovernmental agreement with GDEcD. GDEcD is working with third-party vendor GeoSolutions to extract the WIASRD data. Once finalized, these data sets are uploaded to the Army via secure file transfer protocol; the Army will merge the Georgia data with pre-separation data for those who received UCX in Georgia and those who separated from the Army with an attachment to Georgia between January 2002 and March 2015.

GDOL reported that it is separately finalizing its agreement with Upjohn for analysis of profiling data, creation of a new profiling model to identify claimants at risk of exhausting their benefits, and a service delivery model for UCX claimants, if feasible. Georgia's maximum number of weeks of UI coverage changed to adjust twice per calendar year with the average statewide unemployment rate; this change requires additional adjustments to the profiling model.

DD-214[6] access component. Currently, GDOL has no access to DD-214 data except through its customers. GDOL views electronic access to this data as a tremendous benefit for

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[6] The DD Form 214 Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty contains key data about a service member's military career and discharge status; this information is frequently used to verify eligibility for benefits post-separation.

AJCs to quickly identify customer eligibility for UCX benefits, veterans' program eligibility, and Work Opportunity Tax Credits for employers who hire veterans. GDOL incorporated language in its MOU with the Army such that the Army would facilitate discussions between GDOL and the offices within the military that control access to the data. The Army was optimistic that GDOL could be incorporated into a pilot program for DD-214 access.

Objective 5: Reinforce implementation of POS

a.   Georgia reported that the NVTI training on refocusing guidelines reinforced POS because the guidelines require that all AJC customers receive correct assessments.

b.   As reported earlier, Georgia modified its Veteran/Eligible Spouse Priority of Service Information Sheet (GDOL-3404) to better identify veterans including those with SBEs and POS-eligible veterans.

Objective 6: Accurately track and report pilot outcomes

a.   Georgia spent $295,244.80 in cumulative grant funds for the three grant years from July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2015, out of a total grant award of $750,000. Unobligated funding for Georgia was $454,755.20 at the end of the grant.

b.   Georgia indicated that it tracked service receipt and outcomes for Army UCX claimants served by the initiative, including the number of Army UCX claimants receiving benefits, duration of receipt, number contacted, number receiving AJC services, and number entering employment. The grant team planned to generate these measures for inclusion in its final quarterly report, although this information was not included in Georgia's final report.

With its grant modification, Georgia sent all Army UCX customers to the REA intensive services program. The REA program requires a comparison group, and the state hopes to see some positive outcomes for UCX recipients of REA services. Georgia reported that it focused on the REA strategy because REA had demonstrated positive participant outcomes including reductions in UI durations. GDOL reported that it is too early to assess the impact of REA in terms of durations, because Georgia initially had selection-process issues when fewer individuals were in the program.

c.   GDOL hoped to sustain several initiatives developed under this grant. To do so, it hoped to have data to report successful outcomes of the REA strategy and credentialing through Troops to Trucks to help in obtaining other workforce and veterans' funding for these strategies.

Objective 7: Ensure compliance with DOL requirements

Georgia collaborated with DOL and its contractors throughout the grant period.

C. Summary of grant experience

The Georgia grant team reflected on the sustainability, replicability, and scalability of the activities that took place under this grant. The team appreciated that the UCX grant has allowed Georgia to be flexible and creative. The grant team reported that the website and other additional

tools/resources it developed are a significant benefit. TAP activities and the more intensive REA services were perceived as beneficial, as was connecting with veterans earlier in the process. The grant team hopes to continue these grant activities, although some will require specific funding to be sustainable.

The team also reflected on the lessons learned from this grant, and characterized many of these lessons as typical trial and error and start-up for any new initiative. They anticipated certain challenges typical of multiagency collaborations on data exchange and websites, such as confidentiality, technical, and data issues. They also experienced challenges initially in the REA random assignment for UCX clients. Overall, the grant team believed that its efforts have worked well, and in retrospect would not have taken a different approach. The team noted particularly that it was able to identify Army UCX customers, which is key to service provision.

The grant team identified promising practices that emerged from their grant, including the development of processes in general and modified forms to identify customers. In Georgia, WIA is housed in one information system; Wagner-Peyser and UI are in a different system. A promising practice is the coordination of systems and processes across different organizations, and developing data-sharing agreements that benefit customers. The team reflected that this project brought data sharing to the forefront and made it happen more quickly than it would have without the grant funding.

GDOL expressed significant concerns about outreach and service gaps even with its Army UCX strategies in place. Staff work with customers who have significant barriers to employment, including post-traumatic stress disorder. Such barriers can go undiagnosed, or their impact might go unrecognized for those who are ready to transition. When an AJC cannot address their needs, veterans with such significant barriers to employment must be connected to the appropriate services as quickly as possible.

GDOL also expressed concern that many veterans struggle to access the right resources. Veterans need help expediting the process and translating their military skills to civilian sectors. Bringing veterans into the AJCs is a substantial challenge; the AJCs must better identify transitioning service members and veterans and improve marketing to them.

Veteran/Eligible Spouse Priority of Service Information Sheet (GDOL-3404)

Georgia Department of Labor
Veterans/Eligible Spouse Priority of Service Information Sheet

Name: _____ SSN: _____

PRIORITY OF SERVICE

Priority of service is the right of veterans or eligible military spouses to receive employment, training, and placement services before non-eligible persons, as long as other provisions of the law are met. Please complete this questionnaire so we can determine your eligibility for priority of service and other veterans' services.

Do you need an interpreter? ☐ Yes ☐ No If "Yes," in what language? _____

VETERANS		
ARE YOU A VETERAN?		
1. Are you now serving, or have you served in active* military, naval, or air service? If YES, please answer the following questions:	☐ Yes	☐ No
a. Did you serve more than 180 days?	☐ Yes	☐ No
b. Will you retire from service within 24 months or separate from service within 12 months?	☐ Yes	☐ No
"Active service" includes full-time Federal service in the National Guard or a Reserve Component. This does not include full-time duty performed strictly for training purposes (e.g., weekend or annual training), or full-time active duty performed by National Guard personnel mobilized by State authorities.		
2. Did you serve in a Reserve Unit during a period of war, campaign, or expedition for which a campaign badge was authorized?	☐ Yes	☐ No
3. Were you discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable?	☐ Yes	☐ No
ARE YOU A DISABLED VETERAN?		
4. Do you have a VA rated service-connected disability of 30% or more?	☐ Yes	☐ No
5. Do you have a VA rated service-connected disability of 10% or 20% with an employment barrier?	☐ Yes	☐ No
6. Do you have a VA rated service-connected disability of less than 30% without an employment barrier?	☐ Yes	☐ No
7. Do you have a disability that is not service-connected or VA rated?	☐ Yes	☐ No
ARE YOU A HOMELESS VETERAN?		
8. Are you a homeless veteran?	☐ Yes	☐ No
A "homeless veteran" is an individual who served in the active military, naval or air service, who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable, and who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This does not include individuals who are imprisoned or detained.		
ELIGIBLE MILITARY SPOUSES		
ARE YOU MARRIED TO A VETERAN?		
9. Do you have a letter from the VA stating that you are an eligible spouse?	☐ Yes	☐ No
10. Does your spouse have a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability?	☐ Yes	☐ No
11. Has your spouse been listed as forcibly detained or interred by a foreign government or power, missing in action, or captured in the line of duty for a total of more than 90 days?	☐ Yes	☐ No
ARE YOU THE SURVIVING SPOUSE OF A VETERAN?		
12. Did your spouse die of a service-connected disability as evaluated by the VA?	☐ Yes	☐ No
13. Did your spouse die while having a total permanent disability resulting from a service-connected disability?	☐ Yes	☐ No
MILITARY DOCUMENTS		
Do you need assistance in requesting military documents?	☐ Yes	☐ No

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program
Auxiliary aids and services are available to individuals with disabilities upon request.

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APPENDIX B

ILLINOIS GRANT ACTIVITIES

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A. Synopsis of the state's plan

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) plan focused on the use of social and digital media to conduct outreach to current and potential UCX claimants; deliver job opportunities to claimants through Facebook, Twitter, texts, and other social media; track progress of UCX claimants; and track market penetration of IllinoisJobLink.com and click-through data using the services of a digital outreach company. These activities were organized into the three areas described below. This section briefly summarizes the strategies and activities in the original plan and their status at the end of the grant. Illinois incorporated other activities into its grant, described in Section B.

1. Digital media outreach

IDES worked with Media Link, a media buyer, to secure strategic online positioning and targeting of customers, and to track results. Methods included the following:

- **Google AdWords.** This tool can promote and show text and links to users who search for category-related terms, as well as show both job seekers and employers success stories of veterans being hired through IDES/partner services.

- **Above-the-fold display (banner media).** Banner media display information to Army UCX claimants interested in jobs and to professionals in human resources and recruiting while they are reading and watching relevant content.

- **YouTube "TrueView" videos.** This service runs videos that are 30 seconds or longer as skippable media before popular YouTube videos; charges are incurred only if the user chooses to watch 30 seconds or more of the media. It includes a 300x60-pixel "call-to-action" companion banner.

- **Facebook messaging/media.** Messaging runs targeted media on Facebook based on selected user interest and geographic characteristics, such as to members of a veterans group in Illinois.

- **LinkedIn media.** IDES ran targeted media on LinkedIn based on user interest and geography, such as veterans' employment groups in Illinois.

IDES targeted for outreach people matching a particular profile, using online pop-up, banner, and video preview ads about IllinoisJobLink.com (IJL). Metrics generated by the advertising were used to gauge the success of the campaign. IDES planned to develop outreach materials (brochures and fact sheets) and a series of educational modules to target this population via social media and traditional formats. ES staff also planned to search LinkedIn for resumes of customers with Army experience and send these customers messages about the education and training services available to UCX claimants. DVOP staff planned to "friend" claimants on Facebook and to follow claimants on Twitter so they could send them messages regarding updated contact information should they lose touch. These LinkedIn and Facebook approaches were rejected for being too labor-intensive, likely to have a low payoff, and not sustainable in the long term. Media Link determined during its first procurement that IDES lacked the staff resources to adequately launch or monitor Twitter or LinkedIn accounts. IDES indicated that it had positive results with the digital education and outreach, including (1) display/banner ads on multiple websites, (2) Google AdWords, and (3) YouTube TrueView Video Ad.

2. Digital media training/implementation

As part of general veterans' staff training, IDES facilitated a discussion on using social media to engage in outreach and maintain contact with employers and current and potential Army UCX claimants. Because the state had no guidelines in place, IDES planned to document and disseminate these promising practices.

3. Content development

IDES planned to recruit three to five Army veterans who found employment via WIA training and www.IllinoisJobLink.com. IDES planned to enter into an interagency agreement with the Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS) to create content featuring those veterans in video clips and print and digital media (banner ad content). The content was to be used in digital outreach targeting Army UCX claimants and human resource professionals interested in hiring Army UCX claimants. IDES digital outreach materials feature the likenesses of veterans who were successfully served by IDES employment staff. Without a state law change however, IDES is not allowed to feature actual Army veterans who were served by IDES staff.

B. Update on plan objectives

This section describes the strategies and activities implemented by the grantee, within the framework of the plan objectives; it also documents implementation challenges, proposed solutions, and next steps as of the end of the grant. The IDES grant team experienced two major staff transitions during the three year grant period, both involving the departure of the current grant director and other key staff. The third and final grant director was identified toward the end of the grant period after a several months' lag in activity.

Objective 1:   Develop a strong collaborative partnership among the UI system, the public workforce system, and the three components of the Army (regular, Guard, and Army Reserves) to work on UCX projects

a.   IDES reported partnering with legislative representatives across the state to disseminate information. These legislative staff often have access to more resources than the IDES partners for disseminating information about events, including to their constituent databases.

b.   IDES Business Outreach and the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) Learning Exchange collaborated on a plan that would incorporate partners, colleges, TAP in the Great Lakes, and exiting military members. This plan, described in quarterly grant reports, would include strategies for increasing the number of qualified veteran candidates for jobs in the transportation, distribution, and logistics industries, and would leverage IllinoisJobLink.com registrations, WIA grant opportunities, colleges, and the TAP program to identify, evaluate, and recruit people for long-term, gainful employment. The final grant team reported that there had been no progress on this planning effort since March 2014.

c.   The grant team reported that IDES currently has no relationship with the TAP program or the contractor leading it.

d.   In its December 31, 2013, quarterly report, IDES indicated that it had participated in the Governor's Fracking Group, which included multiple agency representatives and reviewed job

creation in addition to other fracking-related topics. By the end of the grant period, fracking was no longer an economic growth option in the Illinois Oil Basin due to environmental concerns and a stringent permitting process.

Objective 2:   Identify and implement innovative outreach projects

a.   **Digital media outreach.** IDES contracted with Media Link as its advertising buyer. Multiple websites frequented by military members, and Army veterans specifically, were chosen for the media outreach campaign. These websites were targeted with digital outreach ads during IDES's larger Phase 2 procurement, which ended in July 2014. There was no grant activity related to social media for the last several months of the grant; the staff person overseeing this strategy left during the second grant team transition at IDES. Major search engine outreach included Google AdWords, Bing, Yahoo, YouTube, and Facebook. IDES chose not to incorporate Pandora because of hurdles to the procurement of a vendor to create an audio message that would be featured in the proper format for Pandora.

A continued measure of the campaign's success was the increase in "likes" on the IDES Facebook page for the quarter ending June 30, 2014. When IDES began the campaign, there were slightly more than 600 likes, a level that held steady for some time. The Facebook advertising campaign targeted people with veterans and/or military organizations in their profile or employment history. IDES reported that it was not running any other Facebook outreach campaigns ran during this time, so IDES was reasonably certain that the increase to a total of more than 11,000 likes was from Army veterans or their family members. IDES exceeded its goal of increasing the number of Facebook likes to 10,000 by the end of the campaign in July 2014. These efforts helped IDES grow its Illinois veterans' communications network to which it could then more efficiently disseminate information about employment services for veterans.

Additionally, IDES's total digital media outreach resulted in more than 94,000 click-throughs to the Army veterans' landing page on www.IllinoisJobLink.com at Resources/Job Seeker Resources/Veteran Services, and more than 269,000 total views of the IDES outreach piece on YouTube. Clicks and views are counts of how many times people interacted with the content. In more than 39,000 of these YouTube views (14.5 percent), users viewed a complete video. YouTube tracks only organic views initiated by users in the view count shown on the video in YouTube itself, not paid advertising views. Therefore, the YouTube figure is lower. IDES received the count of paid advertising views from Media Link; IDES did not have a mechanism to obtain these data directly. More comprehensive digital media results are incorporated into this appendix in the Social Media Tracking Report.

Impressions are similar to views of a billboard or a television advertisement. IDES spent $136,858 on advertising that yielded more than 28.7 million impressions. IDES reported that this return on investment tracks with industry averages, and it was pleased with the results.

IDES's goal in using Facebook and YouTube was to cast a net that would catch veterans and direct them to ES resources, rather than linking them only to veterans' services. IDES wanted to increase both the number of people it serves and improve the speed and quality of its service. IDES focused on contacting veterans using multiple methods with the assumption that it would bring more veterans to the agency, and IDES could then direct them to where they need to go.

Advertisements within Facebook can link only to Facebook pages, not to outside sites such as IllinoisJobLink.com. IDES advertisements linked back to the IDES Facebook page that IDES used as its main venue for disseminating information. All of the general information available on the Facebook page applied to veterans.

Advertisements on YouTube and LinkedIn directed veterans to an IJL webpage with an Army UCX-specific form where veterans could enter their contact information to receive further information about workforce services. Although IDES was unable to verify the number of individuals who had completed the contact form, the team did not think the number was large.

Although the Media Link contract did not include search engine optimization (SEO), IDES reported undertaking its own projects to improve SEO. For example, jobs in the labor exchange were geocoded to be optimized for searches. As a result, Google searches for phrases such as "jobs in IL" and "Chicago jobs" should be more likely to point to the IJL site. At the end of the grant IJL was the fourth site that appeared in response to a search of "IL jobs," whereas its page rank had once been extremely low on the list of hits. IDES reported that it had not identified a way to target veterans with SEO because geocodes are not useful for this approach.

With the extension of the Army UCX grant, IDES contemplated extending the digital media contract; the focus of the next segment would be "explainer" videos (described below) which should better describe available services to veterans. IDES had not determined how to extend the digital media initiative beyond the end of the grant in June 2015, and the final transition in the grant team correlated with an end to the digital media initiative.

The state did not have policies and procedures in place to guide staff in using social media. A conference was held during the grant to gather information on how staff want to use social media. At that conference, LVERs cited their success maintaining relationships with businesses through LinkedIn. LVERs had maintained contact with employers' human resources staff to find out about job openings and invited employers to participate in events. IDES reported that it was developing a promising practices document for social media use and planned to share it once it was complete. IDES also planned to train staff once the state developed social media policies and procedures.

b. **Explainer videos and robocalls.** IDES reported trying to create a multifaceted outreach approach; it reached out to both employers and veterans using multiple tools and coordinated the effort among stakeholders including community organizations, colleges, and agency partners. Outreach to employers involved meeting with employers to identify their hiring needs and service-delivery approaches that would help meet those needs, including specialized college courses funded by workforce partner grants to train potential employees. To better engage Army veterans ages 18 to 24, Illinois planned to procure a vendor to create web-based interactive explainer videos of the employment services that IDES provides UCX claimants. These online videos would demonstrate the array of services IDES provides in a simple, direct, and eye-catching manner. The videos were intended to provide an alternative outreach method to UCX benefit recipients whose approved claims automatically generate basic workforce service registrations in IJL. IDES staff had been spending a lot of time calling new UCX registrants with little result. They received pushback from veterans who said they did not need services and that they had received similar services when leaving the military. IDES planned to measure and

assess the impact of these videos by tracking view rates, click-through rates, viewing durations, and a number of other measures. IDES was working through the state procurement process to contract with a vendor. A request for proposals would ideally have been completed in November 2014. IDES anticipated that it would take four to six months to secure a vendor before creation of the videos could begin. IDES also needed to determine where to host the videos.

IDES also reported exploring ways to incorporate its new telephone notification system into existing robocalls. IDES wanted robocall recipients to be able to push a button to connect with a live agent if they heard something that sparked their interest, to discuss it rather than connect to a voice mail or recording. IDES planned to test this new approach first with veterans. Along with the explainer videos, this work was expected to be the primary focus under the extended grant. At the end of the grant, the final grant director was not able to locate any documentation or other information related to these efforts.

c.   **Program office consolidation.** In Illinois, separate agencies run Wagner-Peyser and WIA. IDES consolidated its offices to better provide employment services through partnerships with the local workforce boards throughout the state. UI work was moved behind the scenes to processing or telephone centers because much of the customer contact is now by telephone. WIA and Wagner-Peyser are now housed in the same physical offices; job seekers no longer have to travel to different locations to get the same or complementary services. In mandatory reemployment services workshops, staff can now present both ES and WIA services, and the staff of these programs can coordinate with each other and with the other mandatory partners. The grant team reported that these new partnerships enable the agency to engage in innovative outreach opportunities. IDES also anticipated gaining additional sponsors for its veterans' events through this enhanced service-delivery model.

d.   **Identifying veterans.** The final grant team reported on a new feature for identifying veterans who may need intensive services. If a veteran who registers with IJL meets certain criteria, his or her case-details page will include an indicator/flag to notify DVOPs that the veteran may require intensive services. IJL produces a report that includes all veterans who may need intensive services. For example, it could create a list of special disabled veterans ages 18 to 24 in a particular zip code. During the grant, IDES created these lists on a regional basis for job fairs, email blasts, and the like. When there is a hiring event, GDOL soft codes job listings to that event. For example, if there is a veterans hiring event in Peoria, GDOL will put "PVH" in front of each job listing in IJL that will be represented at that hiring event. Job seekers can search for "PVH" to find all jobs that will be represented at the event. Business services coordinators identify veterans who match the openings that will be represented at the hiring event and notify them by telephone and email of the employers and job opportunities that match their skills. They also coordinate onsite interviews with employers and expedite the hiring process if possible. After the event, these coordinators disseminate to all employers a survey to identify the number of on-site hires, conditional hires, and resumes reviewed. The grant team reported that this process had worked very well for several veterans hiring events.

e.   **Hiring events**. The grant team reported that in addition to the advance matching of participating employers and job seekers described above, hiring events during the grant period featured development of a microsite listing the employers and jobs so that veterans can customize resumes and prepare for employer conversations. IDES requested an enhancement to

the IJL system so that when people sign up for an event, their characteristics would be automatically attached to their registrations, and IDES could follow up with them after the event. IDES would be able to match the types of contact it has with people and whether they came to an event, enabling IDES to more efficiently determine which approaches tend to work well. IDES had yet to internally review this enhancement before the last grant team transition.

For a November 2013 hiring event at the Decatur National Guard Armory, IDES collaborated with Illinois Employment Support for the Guard and Reserve, Illinois National Guard, Richland Community College (RCC), and local WIA partners. RCC provided on-the-spot readiness evaluations to streamline direct hires for truck driver and other positions after completion of training. This program was not associated with Illinois' initiative on accelerated pathways to veterans' credentialing. Six to seven veterans were hired as a result of this event. An Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) hiring event held in November 2014 was attended by fewer job seekers than the 2013 event; 120 attended the 2013 event, and 54 attended the 2014 event. Despite the lower attendance, ADM officials perceived that more high-skilled job seekers had participated in the 2014 event; they anticipated as many as 15 hires resulting from this event.

The last grant team reported that during 2014 IDES participated in an American Legion hiring event and at least three stand downs, which are events designed to bring services and supplies to homeless veterans. At the American Legion event, IDES staff conducted workshops focused on state employment. IDES provided two DVOPs and a letter of support for a two-day stand-down at the Chicago Armory in May 2014, one DVOP and a letter of support for a Safe Haven stand down in July at Douglas Park, and one DVOP for a Peoria stand-down for homeless veterans in October in coordination with Goodwill in Peoria. The grant team reported that at least three stand-downs were planned for 2015 around the state: Safe Haven, DuPage County, and Peoria. The grant team reported that two day stand-downs in Chicago are generally attended by 1,200–2,000 veterans with a steady flow of people throughout the event. The final grant team reported that based on personal observation, participants at these events appear to be fully engaged.

Objective 3:   Develop service delivery strategies that enhance reemployment services and improve the employment outcomes of UCX claimants

a.   **Short training sessions.** IDES indicated that 30-minute skill-building and employability sessions for people not interested in, or unable to attend, longer trainings are a useful means of providing services to those who are unlikely to participate otherwise. Recording these sessions or making them available remotely when allowed by the content could further extend services. These sessions were being held in the week leading up to veterans' hiring events and focused on skills translation, mock interviews, and boosting morale. Some partners also conducted sessions on site at hiring events.

b.   **Monthly pre-hiring workshops.** The grant team reported that local offices throughout each region hold monthly workshops for veterans. Topics for these workshops vary but include resume preparation, job search techniques, networking skills, and so on. The final grant team reported that IDES had conducted monthly workshops for 610 veterans between July 1, 2014 and March 31, 2015, with 455 veterans participating in workshops between July and September 2014, and fewer than 100 veterans participating in each of the subsequent two quarters.

IDES also assisted in at least one pre-hiring event workshop related to the American Legion Veterans Hiring Event in July 2014. Illinois's CMS Veterans' Outreach presented state employment-focused workshops on site during the event. CMS posts job openings for state agencies under the control of the governor, and it assists veterans with researching and finding jobs within state government. The American Legion provided laptops for this training.

c.   **Resunate resume-building tool.** IDES was asked to participate in a trial of Resunate, a resume builder/optimizer tool designed to better align candidates with the job postings that interest them. Resunate provides candidates with a customized, job-specific resume based on the job to which they are applying. IDES launched the first trial in its Woodstock office where staff are co-located with their workforce partners. Staff promoted this tool with IDES veteran clients through one-on-one demonstrations and workshops. Veteran clients provided positive feedback, describing the program's ease of use, the user-friendly resume templates, and especially the quantitative evaluation of individual resumes. Because IDES focused on the job-seeker component of Resunate as a first step, employers had not yet been widely informed of the system nor had they been asked to provide feedback on it.

Resunate had a soft launch in the beginning of September 2014. Press releases announced in early October 2014 that IDES had fully implemented Resunate within IllinoisJobLink.com to enhance all job seekers' resumes. IDES was organizing training for DVOPs to ensure they were prepared to promote this tool to their newly identified SBE group and veterans ages 18 to 24. The grant team reported that about 700 people had viewed the system as of that point.

A private company provides Resunate; therefore, details about its functions are proprietary. As a result, the grant team had little information about how Resunate creates and evaluates resumes. The team reported that in general the system works by matching key words in the job posting to resumes in the database. When a job seeker clicks the "optimize my resume" button at the bottom of a particular job listing, Resunate ensures that the job seeker's resume includes key words and other facets of the job listing. Job seekers can save multiple resumes optimized for various jobs in the system.

d.   **Refocusing guidelines.** The grant team reported that the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) presented refresher training on Veterans' Program Letter No. 03-14 regarding the Jobs for Veterans State Grant program (JVSG) refocusing guidelines in late September 2014. Concurrent tailored workshops were run for DVOPs (including regional service program managers) and LVERs (including business service managers who supervise them). The training covered new roles, SBEs, and career coaching. NVTI returned to Chicago to present training on advanced case management, leadership, implementation of veterans' services, job readiness coaching, and effective outreach to businesses.

IDES reported that it was implementing the refocusing guidelines by revising its guidelines, job descriptions, performance reviews, and policy and procedure documents. IDES also modified its triage form (the Veteran Employment Assistance Form, renamed the Veteran's Intake Form), which is used in deciding whether a veteran should see an ES staff member or a DVOP, to ensure that both Wagner-Peyser and JVSG staff have a clear understanding of how to provide employment services to veterans. The Veteran's Intake Form is structured around SBEs and other characteristics specified in the VPL, and also tied to the current poverty level, which is

updated annually. Instructions on how to use the form were to be included when DVOPs train other office staff and partners. The form and instructions are incorporated into this appendix.

A 10-minute refresher training for staff was intended to cover the established triage process and the target groups that should be referred to DVOP specialists. The refresher would also emphasize the importance of creating a complete PLUS Account in IJL for Army veterans.

IDES reported spending almost $100,000 on training, funded directly from JVSG funds. IDES included managers in the training and also sent two nonveteran staff to NVTI, because DOL said ES specialists could begin to attend. Now that veterans, Wagner-Peyser, and WIA workforce programs are co-located within the same offices, IDES emphasized the importance of all partners understanding these topics and avoiding sending all veterans directly to DVOPs and LVERs. The team indicated that veterans' staff who attended these trainings should be able to better train the new consolidated office staff, emphasizing the importance of the new veteran intake process incorporated into this appendix.

Objective 4:   Identify and implement innovative data-sharing projects

a.   **UCX billing automation.** IDES sent the Army Human Resources Command (HRC) daily initial UCX claims reports and monthly and quarterly billing reports via a secure file transfer protocol (FTP). The two primary goals of this exchange were to improve the UCX billing process and to involve the Army's Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis at West Point in activities that would facilitate long-term analysis of veterans' experiences by HRC. These reports included the same fields present in the paper billing statement, with the addition of fields for address, email, and telephone number. The Army worked with the IDES reporting team manager on this exchange. After receipt from IDES, HRC passed the full data set along to the standard UCX billing process. The FTP system was set up for bidirectional data transfer, although only transfers from IDES to HRC took place. This transfer was set up some time ago at the direction of DOL. Although the Army and the IDES division manager of Economic Information and Analysis worked together to establish a data-sharing agreement, the final grant team confirmed that a formal agreement was never finalized.

b.   **Improving information exchange and participant tracking.** The grant team reported that IDES's business architecture team (BAT) worked with the Army and Illinois CMS to establish an interface to enable electronic sharing of UI information currently stored in the Illinois Benefits Information System. When a UI/UCX claim is approved, a partial registration is created in IJL. The BAT developed a participant group link in the labor exchange system that enables staff to easily identify Army UCX claimants and run reports. As part of the co-location of workforce partners, data-sharing agreements were established, and IDES partners have IJL accounts that enable them to access this information. Before the last grant team transition, IDES had planned to investigate whether it can share this information with other parties through established data-sharing agreements.

During the grant period BAT completed other processes to facilitate outreach and tracking of services to veterans. A nonreportable service code was created so that UCX participants can be flagged and sent follow-up emails and letters after initial contact, even if they refuse services by telephone. This process enables IDES to track veterans for follow-up and assess the types of

responses generated by various outreach efforts, without inflating the service numbers reported to DOL. Although IDES reported that this approach did not improve veterans' responses to requests for information as much as IDES had hoped, it did improve the tracking of veterans in the system. Storage of scanned documents in IJL within clients' online profiles was expected to become available in late October 2014, after procedures for use were distributed to staff. This functionality would enable staff to scan and upload relevant documents, providing easy access to information and eliminating duplicate work for both staff and clients. For example, the veterans' registration assessment form could be attached to a client's record.

c. **Improving lists of transitioning veterans.** The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) receives a report on transitioning service members with Illinois addresses on their DD-214 forms. This information is not currently shared with IDES; the LVERs and DVOPs do not receive this information but would like access to it to better target veterans for services. IDVA stores this information in its system for benefits; it is unknown whether IDVA conducts outreach based on these data.

IDES met with IDVA during summer 2014 to discuss exchange of DD-214 data. IDVA implemented changes to the way in which it receives this information from the Army. IDVA also updated its systems in terms of how forms are filled out, which would facilitate the transfer of information. The grant team reported that IDES and IDVA met regularly and had a very good relationship; they had planned to meet in September 2014 to discuss how to share information across the agencies (electronically or as images), a time line for sharing, and other details. This meeting was cancelled due to an IDVA change of leadership; subsequently the IDES grant team transitioned. The new grant team met with IDVA in June 2015 about sharing DD-214 data and planned to revisit whether these data can be legally shared with IDES.

Objective 5: Reinforce implementation of POS

a. The grant team reported that centers provide POS through outreach events, workshop participation, referrals, and employment linkages. New job postings on IJL have a 24-hour hold for veterans. After that, they are opened to spouses for 24 hours, and then to the public. The centers planned to use feedback from staff and partners, the number of job placements, and the number of job opportunities and connections provided by partners to measure POS on a monthly basis. They also planned to analyze best practices and how to better suit training components to the needs of veterans.

Objective 6: Accurately track and report pilot outcomes

a. Illinois expended $639,780.54 in cumulative grant funds for the three grant years July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2015, out of the $750,000 grant award. Unobligated funding for Illinois was $110,219.46 at the end of the grant.

b. Please see the end of this appendix for the social media tracking report.

c. IDES reported that it tracks veterans' and employers' metrics including number of veterans attending events, resulting hires, on-the-spot interviews, and resumes collected. Prior to the last transition, the grant team planned to work toward additional quantitative reporting of activities, service receipt, and outcomes for Army UCX claimants in its quarterly grant reports.

These outcomes would ideally include service receipt, UCX benefit duration, entry to employment, and related measures for Army UCX claimants.

Objective 7:   Ensure compliance with DOL requirements

Illinois collaborated with DOL and its contractors throughout the grant period.

C. Summary of grant experience

Due to a change in administration and a reduction of staff during the final year of the grant, the second of the three grant teams had left the agency, and there had been no activities under this grant since the latter part of 2014. The final grant management team therefore had little information to provide on the grant experience and was not able to fully reflect on the sustainability, replicability, and scalability of the partnerships and activities that took place in Illinois throughout this grant; lessons learned; or promising practices.

The grant team was not sure what would happen after the grant with the social media initiatives that were the core of the grant strategies. The team indicated that it would continue to work on capacity building through system enhancements and staff training, improving and modernizing reemployment services for veterans between the ages of 18 and 24, and soft coding and outreach related to veteran-specific hiring events.

The team believed that its outreach to veterans is on par with other states. It indicated that many veterans still are not aware of the available employment and training services. The team believes it is achieving what is feasible with the tools available. It has re-established communications with IDVA. It did not plan to establish a practice of referring all UCX claimants to REA under the grant, as some of the other grantees had done.

SOCIAL MEDIA TRACKING REPORT

	Clicks	Views	Impressions	CTR	View 100%	Gross Spend	CPC	CPV
Google - Central Illinois	3,823		1,231,694	0.31		$4,949.72	$1.10	
Google - Chicago	12,241		2,134,838	0.57		$14,342.53	$1.00	
Google - East St. Louis	3,233		984,120	0.33		$3,996.54	$1.05	
Google - Illinois	22,047		3,459,459	0.64		$25,832.27	$1.00	
YouTube - Central	782	22,183	157,635		15	$3,432.36		$0.13
YouTube - Chicago	2,167	70,122	503,916		15	$10,505.21		$0.13
YouTube - East. St. Louis	633	17,014	153,928		13	$2,569.84		$0.13
YouTube - Illinois	3,655	116,120	831,163		15	$17,542.51		$0.13
Bing/Yahoo - Central	1,736		268,137	0.65		$3,327.68	$1.63	
Bing/Yahoo - Chicago	2,741		460,571	0.6		$9,230.73	$2.86	
Bing/Yahoo - East St. Louis	1,760		200,338	0.88		$3,280.69	$1.58	
Bing/Yahoo - Illinois	6,097		1,119,194	0.54		$12,972.36	$1.81	
Facebook - Illinois	10,551		3,521,190	0.3		$7,119.13	$0.57	
Facebook - Chicago	5,924		2,054,958	0.288		$4,514.07	$0.65	
Facebook - Central	1,695		927,206	0.183		$1,692.76	$0.85	
Facebook - East St. Louis	1,328		564,438	0.235		$1,384.82	$0.89	
LinkedIn - Illinois	862		4,099,249	0.021		$3,598.60	$3.55	
LinkedIn - Chicago	791		3,906,510	0.02		$3,304.82	$3.55	
LinkedIn - Central	255		890,975	0.029		$1,458.06	$4.86	
LinkedIn - East St. Louis	458		1,310,692	0.035		$1,803.79	$3.35	
Totals:	82,779	225,439	28,780,211			$136,858.49		
Average:				0.35	14.50		$1.50	$0.13

IDES
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
Initials of Reviewing Manager/ ES: _____

Referred to: ES ◯   DVOP ◯

Veteran must be registered in Illinois JobLink
IJL Part ID: _____ *(required field)*

U. S. Military Veteran's Intake Form
~All fields MUST be completed~

Notice: *The information on this form will be kept confidential.*

PRINT CLEARLY

Date: _____

Name: _____   SSN: XXX-XX-_____ *(last 4 only)*

City: _____ State: _____   Zip Code: _____

Phone: (_____)_____   e-Mail: _____

What are you here for today?

    A. I have an appointment with a staff member in this office that has assisted me within the last three weeks?

        No ☐ Yes ☐ If YES, Who? _____

        (If yes, STOP – no need to finish completing this form.)

    B. I need *(check all that apply):* ☐ Job Search Assistance ☐ Unemployment ☐ Workshop ☐ Veterans' Benefits

    C. Enter your dates of "ACTIVE" U.S. Military Service as indicated on your current DD-214 / 215:

        From:___ /___/____   To:___/___/____
           MM / DD / YY   MM / DD / YY

	Yes	No
1. Does your current DD-214 / 215 list your discharge as - DISHONORABLE?	Yes	No
2. Are you between the ages of 18 – 24?	Yes	No
3. Are you a spouse: (If NO, then skip to #4)	Yes	No
a. of a wounded, ill, or injured veteran and they are receiving treatment in a Military Treatment Facility (MTF) or Warrior Transition Units (WTU)?	Yes	No
b. of a veteran that has a total disability resulting from a VA service-connected disability?	Yes	No
c. of a veteran who died of a VA service-connected disability or while a disability was being evaluated by the VA?	Yes	No
d. of a member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who is listed for a total of more than 90 days: (I) missing in action, (II) captured in line of duty by a hostile force, or (III) forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power?	Yes	No
4. Are you currently attending a Transition Assistance Program (TAP) workshop and on "ACTIVE" Duty?	Yes	No
5. Do you have a VA Service-Connected Disability Rating, or were discharged for a service-connected disability, or have a disability claim pending with the VA?	Yes	No
6. Are you Homeless or staying at a Shelter/ Halfway House?	Yes	No
7. Were you discharged from the U.S. Military within the last three years and have been unemployed for 27 or more weeks during the last 12 months?	Yes	No

~ Continues on the back ~

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8. Do you have a record of arrest or conviction and were released from a Prison / Jail?	Yes	No
9. Do you have a High School Diploma or equivalent certificate, such as a GED?	Yes	No

10. Place a check mark (√) in the box next to the most appropriate response below: (source: http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/15poverty.cfm)

Household Size	Annual Income	Check One
1	$11,770 or less	
2	$15,930 or less	
3	$20,090 or less	
4	$24,250 or less	
5	$28,410 or less	
6	$32,570 or less	
7	$36,730 or less	
8	$40,890 or less	
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add $4,160 for each additional person.		
Other or Choose not to disclose information		
Does NOT apply to my Household		

11. Have you registered in Illinois JobLink.com? If NO, then **IMMEDIATELY** ask the front desk staff member to guide you to the computer area or you can access www.illinoisjoblink.com from you mobile device so that you can register today.	Yes	No

Assessment Record
(STOP - For Agency Use ONLY)

Name of ES/WP Staff Member conducting the Assessment: _____

Time: _____   Date Service Entered into Illinois JobLink: _____

How was this Assessment conducted: In-Person ☐   Telephone ☐

Notes:

Summary of Assessment Interview *(Be specific and do not use assumptions)*:	
IJL and Resume Review:	
Computer Skills:	
Work Experience: *Branch of Service – Job Title* *Rank – Deployed - Combat*	
Education: *Military & Civilian*	
Licenses & Transportation:	
Work Preference: *Type of Work – Shift -* *Relocation*	
Barrier(s) to Employment: *Transportation* *Childcare* *Criminal Record* *Housing / Shelter*	

➢ **Enter all the services in Illinois JobLink.com!**

VIF 3-15   Page 2 of 2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE VETERANS INTAKE FORM (VIF)

PURPOSE:

❖ To ensure "Priority of Service" and "Total Office Responsibility" in providing employment services and Initial Assessments to ALL eligible veterans and eligible persons from the ES / WP staff.

❖ The ES / WP staff must complete the assessment page on the back the VIF for every eligible veteran and eligible person as part of their Initial Assessment. The "Initial Assessment" service must be documented with applicable comments in the Service & Training Plan for each veteran job seeker.

❖ The Office Manager or at the Amercian Job Centers only – the ES staff must review / initial this form and indicate whether the veteran should receive additional Employment Services from the ES/WP staff (No SBE's were noted by the ES/WP staff during the Initial Assessment) or referral to the DVOP specialist (SBE's are were noted by the ES/WP staff during the Initial Assessment) for Intensive Services.

❖ The DVOP specialist reviews both the VIF form and the Initial Assessment service entered in Illinois JobLink as part of their assessment process for Intensive Services / Case Management process and saves it to the veteran's Illinois JobLink.com account as indicated in P&P 7711.

❖ Under NO circumstances will any veteran be referred directly to the LVER.

❖ All veterans must have an Illinois JobLink documented Initial Assessment before being referred to the DVOP specialist for Intensive Services.

INSTRUCTIONS:

❖ Enter all services you provided to this eligible veteran / eligible spouse in Illinois JobLink.com.

❖ Ensure that all the information is clear and legible in the Date / Name / SSN (last 4 digits only) / Phone / and E-Mail sections

❖ What are you here for today?

    A. If the veteran has an appointment and has recently been assisted by an office staff member within the last three (3) weeks, then they do NOT have to complete the rest of this form.

- Call the staff member and confirm the appointment time

- Then explain that the staff member will be here shortly to meet you

    B. See which selection the veteran circled or otherwise indicated here. NOTE: The rest of this form must be completed.

- Job Search Assistance - Review the job seeker's IJL account and the VIF to determine if the job seeker's needs can be best met by the ES/WP staff. If no SBE(s) are identified, then the ES / WP staff must provide all the employment assistance to include referrals to supportive services and partners as well as to the LVER for Job Development.

- Unemployment – Process according to Office Business Plan & Flow Chart

- Workshop – Process according to the Office Business Plan or workshop special instructions by the facilitator

- Veterans Benefits – Refer to the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Service Officer,

      i. provide the veteran with the phone number of the Veterans Service Officer, and

     ii. if there is a Veterans Service Officer collocated in your office, then call them and let them know a veteran is here to see them

C. Review the dates of "ACTIVE" U.S. Military Service and determine if…

- Less than 180 days, then they must be assisted by an ES / W-P staff member - UNLESS *were discharged due to a service-connected disability or #6 below indicates that they are HOMELESS – then continue reviewing the form, complete the Initial Assessment to determine other barriers to employment, and then refer directly to a DVOP specialist*

- Greater than 180 days, then continue reviewing the form and complete the assessment to determine other barriers to employment

1. Does your current DD-214 / 215 list your discharge as - DISHONORABLE?

    a. If Yes, then only ES / WP staff can provide employment assistance! Regardless of the other barriers identified during the triage process, this veteran cannot be referred to the DVOP and the LVER cannot assist them with Job Development! (*Per Title 38, Chapter 42, Section 4211, page 1*).

    b. If No, then this veteran is eligible for employment assistance.

2. Are you between the ages of 18 – 24? (*Note: This population's barrier to employment is their age!*)

    a. If Yes, then continue reviewing the form and complete the assessment to determine other barriers to employment before referring them to the DVOP specialist for employment assistance *or according to your Office / Outpost Business Plan when DVOP specialist is not available*

    b. If No, then this veteran is eligible for employment assistance from the ES / W-P staff but continue reviewing the form and complete the assessment to determine if there are barriers to employment

3. Are you a spouse? (If No, then skip to #4. If Yes, then continue reviewing 3a. –3d).

    a. of a wounded, ill, or injured veteran and they are receiving treatment in a Military Treatment Facility (MTF) or Warrior Transition Units (WTU)?

    - If Yes, then continue to #4 (*must also have a YES in one of the questions 6-8, or No High School Diploma or GED, or a check mark in #10 to indicate a Significant Barrier to Employment*)

    b. of a veteran that has a total disability resulting from a VA service-connected disability?

    - If Yes, then continue to #4 (*must have also have a YES in one of the questions 6-8, or No High School Diploma or GED, or a check mark in #10 to indicate a Significant Barrier to Employment*)

    c. of a veteran who died of a VA service-connected disability or while a disability was being evaluated by the VA?

    - If Yes, then continue to #4 (*must also have a YES in one of the questions 6-8, or No High School Diploma or GED, or a check mark in #10 to indicate a Significant Barrier to Employment*)

    d. of a member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who is listed for a total of more than 90 days: (I) missing in action, (II) captured in line of duty by a hostile force, or (III) forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power?

    - If Yes, then continue to #4 (*must also have a YES in one of the questions 6-8, or No High School Diploma or GED, or a check mark in #10 to indicate a Significant Barrier to Employment*).

4. Are you currently attending a Transition Assistance Program (TAP) workshop and on "ACTIVE" Duty?

    a. If Yes, then continue to the next question (*must also have a YES in one of the questions 6-8, or No High School Diploma or GED, or a check mark in #10 to indicate a Significant Barrier to Employment*)

    b. If No, then continue to the next question.

~SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT~

5. Do you have a VA Service-Connected Disability Rating, or were discharged for a service-connected disability, or have a disability claim pending with the VA?

    a. If Yes, then continue reviewing the form and complete the assessment to determine other barriers to employment before referring them to the DVOP specialist for employment assistance *or according to your Office / Outpost Business Plan when DVOP specialist is not available.*

        • NOTE: If the veteran does not have 180 days or more on Active Duty and was discharged for a service-connected disability, then they are an eligible veteran.

    b. If No, then continue to the next question

6. Are you Homeless or staying at a Shelter / Halfway House?

    a. If Yes, then continue reviewing the form and complete the assessment to determine other barriers to employment before referring them to the DVOP specialist for employment assistance *or according to your Office / Outpost Business Plan when DVOP specialist is not available*

    b. If No, then continue to the next question.

7. Were you discharged from the U.S. Military within the last three years and have been unemployed for 27 or more weeks during the last 12 months?

    a. If Yes, then continue reviewing the form and complete the assessment to determine other barriers to employment before referring them to the DVOP specialist for employment assistance *or according to your Office / Outpost Business Plan when DVOP specialist is not available*

    b. If No, then continue to the next question.

8. Do you have a record of arrest or conviction and were released from a Prison / Jail?

    a. If Yes, then continue reviewing the form and complete the assessment to determine other barriers to employment before referring them to the DVOP specialist for employment assistance *or according to your Office / Outpost Business Plan when DVOP specialist is not available*

    b. If No, then continue to the next question.

9. Do you have a High School Diploma or equivalent certificate, such as a GED?

    a. If YES, then continue to the next question.

    b. If NO, then continue reviewing the form and complete the assessment to determine other barriers to employment before referring them to the DVOP specialist for employment assistance *or according to your Office / Outpost Business Plan when DVOP specialist is not available.*

10. Place a check mark (√) in the box next to the most appropriate response below:

    a. If a check mark is in any box, EXCEPT the box corresponding to *"Does not apply to my Household"*, then continue reviewing the form and complete the assessment to determine other

barriers to employment before referring them to the DVOP specialist for employment assistance *or according to your Office / Outpost Business Plan when DVOP specialist is not available*

~Illinois JobLink.com~

11. Have you registered in Illinois JobLink.com?

    a. If Yes, then complete the VIF Assessment Record form. Note: The VIF Assessment Record is a separate document and is not part of the VIF Form.

    b. If NO, then follow the directions on the form.

ASSESSMENT RECORD: *(This is on the back side (page 2) of the actual VIF form.)*

❖ Name of ES/WP Staff Member conducting the Assessment: *Per VPL 03-14, the DVOP specialist can NOT do the Initial Assessment.*

❖ Time: *what time was it when you did the assessment? Note: This may be important especially when dealing with someone on Parole or Probation.*

❖ Date Service Entered into Illinois JobLink: *should be the same day as the service was provided.*

❖ How was the Initial Assessment conducted: *In-Person method must be used unless the veteran's circumstances require this done via Telephone, such as: disability, lack of transportation, lack of child care, etc.*

❖ Summary of Assessment Interview: *The list on the form is an assessment guide of veteran specific areas that must be covered in order to ascertain a good picture of the veteran's employment / barrier situation as well as the direction needed to get this eligible veteran / eligible person employed.*

    o Make sure your comments are accurately recorded – be specific

    o Do not enter your opinions

    o Enter quotes when possible

❖ Enter all services you provided to this eligible veteran / eligible spouse in Illinois JobLink.com.

FORM MODIFICATIONS:

❖ As defined for the VIF, "modification" is the changing of the words used within the questions and the layout of these questions. It does not refer to the color of the paper that an office may want to use in order to differentiate it from other forms used within the office.

❖ Should the VIF require changes, these changes must be approved from the Veterans' Services Program Management.

DOCUMENT CONTROL:

❖ All VIF will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet dedicated to veterans for a period of three (3) years. After which, all forms that are three (3) years old shall be destroyed in accordance with IDES policy and procedures.

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APPENDIX C

NORTH CAROLINA GRANT ACTIVITIES

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A. Synopsis of the state's plan

North Carolina's plan identified several strategies and activities to address the three major goals and the seven objectives the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) prescribed for the Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service Members (UCX) Claimants Initiative. This section summarizes the strategies and activities in the original plan and their status at the end of the grant. The North Carolina Department of Commerce (NCDC) incorporated other activities into its grant, described in Section B.

1. Expanded staff access to Army UCX customer information

In North Carolina, Unemployment Insurance (UI) staff can view services provided by American Job Center (AJC) staff and AJC staff can identify UI claimants when their partial registrations are automatically created in NC Works Online. The Army UCX flag in the NC Works Online system, which is created when the employer account number on a UCX claim is that of the Army, has given AJC staff a way to identify these specific customers.

2. Outreach to potential customers

Army UCX claimants receive a letter or email from labor exchange staff introducing them to AJC services and asking them to report to an office to (1) complete their labor exchange registration (if they have not already done so online) and (2) receive services. In addition, as part of the Employability Assessment Interview (EAI) program, Army UCX customers receive letters requiring them to come to an AJC in person. NCDC had planned to add information on AJCs and reemployment services to veterans' welcome letters sent by the North Carolina Department of Administration (NCDOA), but NCDOA stopped sending these letters during North Carolina's grant.

3. Skills gap analysis software

North Carolina looked into acquiring skills gap analysis software to identify gaps in military claimants' training or competencies compared with those required in the civilian labor force to use as a career assessment/resource tool. The software would also determine workforce demand and shortage issues, so UCX claimants could devise career paths that focus on high-growth, high-demand occupations using transferable skills from their military experience. With North Carolina's conversion to Geographic Solutions, this functionality is available in NC Works Online so the state did not need separate software.

4. Social media use

North Carolina developed a veteran-specific Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/NCvets?fref=ts. North Carolina also acquired an application (or app) from Geographic Solutions, which is the contracted provider of the NC Works Online site; the app features North Carolina's current Internet-based content. This app can alert veterans to career fairs, job openings, and reemployment services that AJCs offer. The grant team reported that it was challenging for North Carolina to find an appropriate app.

5.　Enhanced training

North Carolina developed and implemented a curriculum for local office staff on delivering services to UCX claimants in October and November 2012, and released updated instructions in March 2013. NCDC requested a list of UCX claimants by county and region from the Division of Employment Security so it could provide additional training sessions, outreach, and materials to AJC staff in areas with high concentrations of veterans. The grant team reported that the division website added further information on services available to veterans. A veterans' portal page was created and all AJCs received a notice about it. The new refocusing rules and responsibilities are shifting the AJCs' approach to outreach and follow-up with veterans.

6.　Additional reporting of activities and outcomes

North Carolina explored providing more quantitative information about activities and outcomes related to the Army UCX grant; it plans to submit this information in a supplemental report during fall 2015. These reporting goals are described in Section B, especially under Objective 6.

B.　Plan objectives

This section describes the strategies and activities implemented by the grantee, within the framework of the plan objectives; it also documents implementation challenges, proposed solutions, and next steps as of the end of the grant.

Objective 1:　Develop a strong collaborative partnership among the UI system, the public workforce system, and the three components of the Army (Regular, Guard, and Reserves) to work on UCX projects

a.　**Grant steering committee.** North Carolina's UCX steering committee included the manager of the Fort Bragg Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) which was renamed the Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in July 2014, representatives from the National Guard and North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Employment Security coordinator, the UCX/UC for Federal Employees (UCFE) claims coordinator, and staff from the North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions.

Grant steering committee members shared information about employment and training programs for North Carolina's veterans, which was disseminated to management and field staff. The grant team reported that while the steering committee went long stretches without formally meeting, emails and telephone calls periodically conveyed updates. It planned to meet regarding the grant outcomes reporting discussed with Mathematica and DOL in September 2014 as well as to discuss rules and responsibilities. As of April 2015, the steering committee had not met to discuss these topics, although the grant director reported speaking with individuals on the steering committee. He planned to have a final close-out meeting of the steering committee before the end of the grant to discuss lessons learned and promising practices from the Army UCX grant as well as a new grant described in Section B.1.c below. The grant director anticipated that the formal steering committee would probably end, but he planned to suggest that some kind of group continue communication; NCDC management would determine what happens.

b. **Governor's working group.** The NCDC grant team continues to meet with and contribute to the veterans' advocacy group that was changed by the governor's proclamation to "The Governor's Working Group for Veterans, Service Members and Their Families." The group meets monthly at the North Carolina National Guard Headquarters. The grant team reported that this is the closest thing the state has to a statewide veterans' advocacy group; its website is NCVeteransWorkingGroup.com. NCDC planned to continue sharing resources with the group as membership grows.

The leadership group within the governor's working group includes executive staff from the North Carolina Division of Health and Human Services, the governor's military advisor, the director of the North Carolina Division of Veteran Affairs (NCDVA), and executive staff from the Department of Commerce. The grant director was a featured speaker at the May 2014 meeting; his topics included an overview of the Army UCX initiative, veterans' statistics for North Carolina, NCDC transitional resources, and other resources for veterans. The leadership group was interested in the presentation, although it was not a forum at which the group discussed leveraging these activities and resources in connection with other veterans' activities and resources in the state.

c. **Ready to Work grant.** The grant team reported that NCDC is partnering to better identify National Guard members who are long-term unemployed and who would benefit from additional outreach. The North Carolina National Guard Education and Employment Center, which is headquartered in Raleigh, NC, and has staff throughout the state, is working with Corporate America Supports You, Direct Employers Association, the NCDC Office of Apprenticeship, the Department of Transportation On-the-Job Training Program, the Capital Area Workforce Board, the North Carolina Center for Global Logistics, the community college system office, individual community colleges, and others on a grant collaboration for the DOL Ready to Work Grant. The North Carolina Army UCX initiative was listed as a partnering office on the grant for referral and collaborative opportunities.

The Ready to Work grant seeks to leverage the services offered through the state's career centers for participants and to have career counselors refer eligible customers as potential grant participants. NC Works online would be promoted and utilized as their major job board and all grant participants would be directed to register in it. The grant was still pending as of April 2015; the UCX grant director noted that the grant point of contact is hard to reach.

d. **Veterans Reentry Committee.** In late October 2014, a Veterans Reentry Committee was established with the NC Department of Corrections, which is part of the NC Department of Public Safety, and the working group. The goal was to establish a "warm handover" when veterans exit the penal system, with LVERs and DVOPs coordinating with corrections staff at exit points throughout the state. Plans for implementing the "warm handover" were lagging by spring 2015, and the grant team planned to refocus on this effort at a coordination meeting scheduled for August 2015. The concept is straightforward; at five or six Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DPSC) sites, staff connect veterans who are pending release with DVOPs who can help them after release. This is not a literal handoff, but DPSC meets with DVOPs and provides the names of the veterans being released. These veterans do not have access to computers or the Internet while incarcerated, so they cannot register for employment services before their release; these veterans need assistance in registering for services and finding

work. NCDC planned to follow up with DPSC on providing computer access when working with incarcerated veterans.

   e.   **Work Opportunity Tax Credit coordination.** In conjunction with the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) coordinator, the grant director gave an overview of the UCX initiative at the annual workforce development conference in October 2014. The grant staff were considering a marketing and outreach venture with the WOTC coordinator with an emphasis on veterans if WOTC was reauthorized for 2015 before the end of the grant. WOTC was not reauthorized but did allow employers to submit WOTC certification requests until April 30, 2015 if they hired a veteran during 2014.

   f.   **BASF outreach.** At the suggestion of the Texas grant manager, NCDC explored working with BASF Corporation recruiters to develop a collaborative veterans' recruiting effort. Texas has successfully collaborated with BASF. However, the BASF jobs in Texas and North Carolina are very different and not many veterans in the Research Triangle Institute area have military occupational codes/specialties (MOC/MOS) that correspond to BASF's needs for scientific/agricultural engineers there. BASF does use NC Works Online.

Objective 2: Identify and implement innovative outreach projects

   a.   **Facebook page.** The NC Division of Workforce Solutions Veterans Facebook page is located at: https://www.Facebook.com/NCvets. The grant team reported that the Facebook page will be sustained after the grant ends; North Carolina believed the site is evolving in a positive direction and it was trying to boost the site's reach. As of August 2015, the Facebook page had 190 "likes." News and resources had been posted two or three times each month. Stand-downs and job fairs were also posted; the grant team did not know whether participants at stand-downs and job fairs heard about these events through Facebook but reported it was analyzing Facebook metrics (such as clicks) on use of the site on a weekly basis. North Carolina planned to continue adding information to the page, for example, when Veterans' Day approaches.

   b.   **Newsletter.** NCDC developed an electronic veteran-focused newsletter. Four newsletters had been released as of summer 2015, with the most recent available at: https://www.ncworks.gov/admin/gsipub/htmlarea/uploads/VetNewsletter/Military-Final-Summer2015.html. The newsletter links to PDFs of longer versions of articles. The grant team reported that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Labor & Economic Analysis Division of NCDC outlined the plan for quarterly editions of the newsletter to run through the duration of the UCX grant. Writers and editors from the Labor & Economic Analysis Division coordinated with the Veterans Newsletter Committee to choose stories, write, and publish the newsletter; UCX steering committee members also contributed content. The newsletter focuses on subjects such as the veterans' unemployment rate compared with the civilian unemployment rate, jobs in which veterans can use their transferrable skills for civilian careers, jobs in demand for veterans with security clearances, career resource information specifically tailored for veterans, and other veterans' benefits and services.

   NCDC planned a wide distribution of the newsletter; the goal was to reach all veterans in the system. However, restrictions on bulk emailing limited NCDC's ability to email the newsletter to all veterans in its system. The grant team reported that several organizations agreed to assist in

distributing the newsletter including the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services; the governor's Working Group for Veterans, Service Members & Their Families; the Soldier for Life transition assistance program at Fort Bragg; Camp Lejeune North Carolina Career Assistance Branch; NCDVA; North Carolina Division of Employment Security; North Carolina Commission on Indian Affairs; North Carolina National Guard Education & Employment Center; and library systems throughout the state. Local AJCs also planned to distribute the newsletter, and veterans' organizations distributed hard copies of the newsletter at posts, including AMVETS, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart. In addition, the grant team reported that the newsletter was incorporated into the newsletter of the governor's working group. The newsletter links to the veterans' Facebook page. The grant team indicated that the newsletter would have to end when the grant ends unless there is an extension of funds. The team indicated that the newsletter was distributed to people they had not reached before and that it appeared to be well received.

   c.   **Welcome letters.** Earlier in the grant, NCDC collaborated with NCDOA on welcome letters. Drafted revisions to these letters provided the address and telephone number of the local AJC and encouraged transitioning service members to visit it. The letter revisions required NCDVA's approval. NCDC indicated that these letters were discontinued; it checked with NCDVA's director who indicated that paper letters would no longer be sent out for budgetary reasons. The NCDVA director said that when NCDVA converts to electronic DD-214s it plans to use email to contact veterans.

   d.   **NC Works Online Veteran Services page.** The grant team reported that ongoing updates are made to the Veteran Services page on NC Works Online (https://www.ncworks.gov/) as well as to the NCDC veterans' page (https://www.nccommerce.com/workforce/job-seekers/veterans). The grant team reported that the Veteran Services page is an initiative of the IT director; suggested resources were obtained through discussions with regional directors and North Carolina's system vendor Geographic Solutions. NCDC reported tracking hits on nccommerce.com but had not monitored traffic specifically to the Veterans' Services page of that site. The grant team reported that outreach letters would refer to the site so veterans will have a head-start on information before coming to an AJC. Suggestions for improvement come from different sources including comments submitted by site users; the grant team reported that the IT director has worked with Geographic Solutions and others to implement these updates.

   e.   **NC4Vets Resource Guide.** An MOU is in place with NCDVA to assist in publishing and distributing paper copies of the NC4Vets Resource Guide; the guide is also available at http://www.nc4vets.com/sites/default/files/2015_nc4vets_all-lr.pdf and on NC Works Online under Veteran Services. The guide contains contact information for AJCs and lists of services provided by state and federal agencies. The grant team reported that there has not been a systematic way of distributing the guide but it will be distributed to as widely as possible to AJCs, bases including Fort Bragg and Camp Lejuene, TAP sites, community colleges, and other organizations including the National Guard and North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services. The team reported that this guide will be sustainable for quite a while after the grant ends since over 150,000 guides were printed using $150,000 in grant funds. The grant team indicated that a smaller number of guides were published prior to the grant. When NCDVA

converts to electronic DD-214s, NCDC plans to use the email addresses in that contact information to distribute guides via email, in lieu of a welcome letter.

NCDC also considered the possibility of ordering a military transition package for each career center as was done in late 2013 under this grant. This was designed as a quick military transition guide; the fliers and brochures were well received and numerous requests for extra copies were processed. The publisher had tentatively agreed to provide discounts, extra publications, and a military transition CD with each order. The grant team anticipated extra demand at offices such as Fayetteville (Fort Bragg), Jacksonville (Camp Lejeune), Goldsboro (Seymour Johnson AFB), and New Bern/Morehead City (MCAS Cherry Point). In its final grant report, the team noted that military transition packages and instructions for use were sent to each AJC during February 2015. Additional packages were sent in May 2015 to each AJC adjacent to a major military installation including the Fort Bragg/Fayetteville NC Works Career Center, Camp Lejeune/Jacksonville NC Works Career Center, and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base/Goldsboro NC Works Career Center. The team anticipated that this would be sustainable long after the grant ended; it has additional packages available for AJCs upon request.

f.   **Advertisements.** The grant team reported that NCDC had pursued advertising workforce services on up to six Capital Area Transit buses in Raleigh. NCDC obtained sample advertisements from the bus system, which has about 20,000 riders per day and covers a large geographical area. The advertising was intended to increase awareness of veterans' services in Raleigh and was approved by the state purchasing office. However, the Capital Area Transit system indicated that it could no longer provide advertising to government organizations, even though its samples were all from government and nonprofit organizations, because some inappropriate advertising had led to a decision that buses can only advertise for businesses. NCDC viewed this as unfortunate because the planned advertisement had a nice photograph and a caption that it was also going to put on the North Carolina Veterans Services page to provide cross-platform advertising. At the end of the grant, the team reported that it pursued an alternative strategy of purchasing portable banners for veterans' specialists to use for outreach and at workshops. NC Commerce Graphics designed a prototype of the banners and signs. NCDC reported that it was rebranding the logo for its labor exchange system and would then produce the banners and signs and distribute them to AJCs. Grant team members anticipated that these banners and signs would help to enhance the visibility of the veteran services program long after the end of the grant.

g.   An overview of the Army UCX Initiative was included in the 2013–2014 Workforce Investment Act Agency Annual Report.

Objective 3:   **Develop service delivery strategies that enhance reemployment services and improve the employment outcomes for UCX claimants**

a.   **REA and EAI.** The North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions and the Division of Employment Security launched the EAI program in March 2014. It is part of the Reemployment Eligibility Assessment (REA) program that launched in 2010. As part of the EAI program, all UI recipients receive a letter saying that they are required to report in person to an AJC and to register in NC Works Online shortly after receiving their first benefit payment. Benefits are discontinued for those who fail to report to the AJC for a scheduled appointment.

Implementation of the EAI and REA programs means that all UCX customers from the Army (and other service branches) are now required to report in person to an AJC. For REA complete services, staff provide customers with an initial assessment, labor market information, an eligibility assessment, and referral to reemployment or training services. REA services can occur over multiple visits if necessary; the agency gets paid for up to three REA visits. EAI complete services are similar but must take place in a single visit.

NCDC staff perceive that this requirement has significantly increased the number of UCX customers receiving services from AJCs. The grant team reported that from March 2013, when it began grant activities, through the end of the grant, over 1,300 Army UCX customers received the REA complete service and approximately 1,500 job development contacts were made to Army UCX customers. Since March 2014, when EAI began, over 450 Army customers received the EAI complete service.

UIPL 13-15 describes Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) grants. NCDC has discussed how to implement this UIPL and plans to do so by January 2016. The team indicated that it expects to leverage the momentum and knowledge from the UCX initiative to develop an effective program as UCX claimants are phased into RESEA. The team reported that all UCX claimants, including Army UCX claimants, will be referred to REA or EAI even after the grant ends.

Since the launch of North Carolina's Army UCX grant activities in March 2013, NCDC reported sending over 6,350 letters and emails to Army UCX customers directing them to the nearest AJC for transition assistance and to NC Works Online for registration, self-service job search, and career information. These letters and emails go out at the same time as the REA and EAI letters and are produced automatically based on partial registrations generated from UCX claims. NCDC planned to cease sending these letters with the end of the grant. Although the EAI letter requires claimants to come to an AJC, the Army UCX letters and emails encouraged them to go online or to an AJC. NCDC had not received any negative feedback or heard of any confusion about customers' receipt of these two different letters. AJC staff have a list of all customers with scheduled appointments two weeks in advance, and can identify veterans and Army UCX claimants on that list. The grant team indicated that it is difficult to measure whether claimants are coming to AJCs and receiving more services as a result of the Army UCX letters.

The team believes that, as a result of sending out the UCX letter and email, a significant number of veterans are registering for workforce services on their own, which gives them a head start when they do come in for mandatory visits. The grant team noted in its final report that preliminary estimates indicate over 460 Army UCX veterans entered employment after being notified of the UCX initiative program by letter or email and after receiving subsequent services by AJC staff since the program started in 2013. The grant team planned to provide more information about Army UCX veteran outcomes during fall 2015.

b.   **On base and TAP collaborations.** North Carolina collaborates with Fort Bragg; there is an AJC branch on base and the grant team reported that a veterans' representative is in the same building as Bill McMillian, the Fort Bragg TAP manager. The team reported that the veterans' representative described benefits during TAP events to encourage Fort Bragg soldiers discharging with a North Carolina home of record or pursuing work in the state to register in NC

Works Online and to visit AJCs for transition services. The grant team indicated that this occurred at most bases in North Carolina.

c.   **Veteran Career Resource Center.** The Fayetteville AJC's Veteran Career Resource Center (VCRC) project was completed during the second year of the grant using grant funds. The VCRC has six computers, a telephone line, access to a fax machine, and on-site staff providing computer assistance and help on developing resumes. Work study students also help veterans. The VCRC is in the same office as the AJC, set off from and behind the main AJC resource area. Veterans are screened at the reception desk for access to the VCRC. The grant team reported that, during a visit to the facility, four or five people were in the VCRC with several waiting to use the computers. Weekly estimates on use of the VCRC were provided to the grant team based on the registration sheet at the AJC; veterans do not fill out a separate sheet to use the VCRC. Estimates are that about 20 to 30 veterans per week use the VCRC; it is also used for group training and small workshops. The grant team reported plans to sustain the Fayetteville VCRC after the grant ends; it reported that maintenance costs are negligible.

NCDC considered developing other VCRCs, specifically in Raleigh-Durham. DOL encouraged this as a good use of grant funding. The grant team thought that it would be difficult to make the necessary expenditures by the end of the grant because the setup (IT, furniture, and so on) takes some time. However, the team reported that it may be possible to set up more VCRCs after the grant ends. The team indicated that veterans seem to respond well to the center.

d.   **Automated skills gap analysis.** North Carolina had explored skills gap analysis software but that functionality is available in Geographic Solutions' NC Works Online. The grant team described how veteran job seekers can go to the Labor Market Information dashboard to compare the kinds of jobs they plan to pursue. Veterans can perform a self-analysis to find out if their experience and skills match those required by employers. If this search determines they are lacking, the dashboard will provide further information on how many years of experience are needed and what specific skills they should develop. It will also identify the closest school that offers training in these skills. Employers can use this functionality to find out how many job seekers meet their requirements and obtain a list of those who match the requirements. Employers can also identify cut points for inclusion in match lists—for example, an employer might ask to be shown individuals having 85 percent of the skills required for a position. The dashboard converts MOS to O*NET codes, which are used in job postings, and lets veterans find out who is hiring, the average wage available, how many others in the system have the skills and experience for a given job, and other information. The grant team staff indicated that this functionality is working well and that they are exploring including additional service codes in the dashboard.

e.   **NC Works email and texting.** The grant team reported that NC Works Online enables staff to send emails and texts directly to job seekers from the system. The grant team indicated that staff are using this functionality and that it is an effective way to engage veteran job seekers; it allows for more frequent, informal, two-way communication. Veterans' staff reported frequent use of the email system and that this functionality worked particularly well for younger veterans compared to phone calls. It is used primarily for individual messages, rather than group blasts, and email is more commonly used than text messages. In addition, UCX claimants can set up their own alerts to find out about the kinds of jobs and employers in which they are interested.

f.   **Mobile app.** The grant team reported that NCDC recently acquired a veteran-specific mobile app from Geographic Solutions, which replicates the functionality of NC Works Online. They reported that this app cost about $88,000 of grant funds and will allow veteran job seekers to locate the nearest AJC, view jobs, access job fairs and information specific to their geographic area, obtain labor market information, crosswalk their MOS to civilian occupations, complete or update their AJC registration, and more. Previously, NCDC explored other options because the Geographic Solutions app was still under development and NCDC wanted to implement an app sooner. NCDC reported that finding an app that met its needs was time-consuming. NCDC has a 14-month contract for the application and expected the app to be sustainable after the grant ends, although the grant team was not sure about long-term funding for the app.

g.   **Veterans' system flag.** The grant team reported that the veterans' flag remained intact after converting to the Geographic Solutions system. AJC staff can use the flag to target outreach to veterans to encourage them to come to the AJC for services. More than 120 veterans' representatives and other staff had been trained on providing services to UCX claimants and using the flag in fall 2012, and updated instructions were provided in March 2013. However, the new rules and responsibilities introduced by the refocusing guidelines led to a transition in who conducts follow-up and therefore uses the flag. After the end of the grant, the flag may remain in the system, but may not be used in the same way to target services.

Objective 4:   Identify and implement innovative data-sharing projects

NCDC reported that it does not have access to DD-214 data but plans to discuss with NCDVA obtaining information from transitioning service members' DD-214s to enhance outreach efforts related to workforce services. NCDVA is converting to electronic DD-214s.

Objective 5: Reinforce implementation of veterans' priority of service

a.   The grant team reported that veterans' staff in the AJCs have received information about veterans' priority of service. NC Works Online contains a self-service entry in which veteran job seekers are advised of their right to priority of service. The team reported that management monitors North Carolina's Priority of Service ETA 9002 F quarterly report.

b.   As part of implementing the refocusing guidelines specified in Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGLs) 19-13 and 20-13, North Carolina reported converting a number of its LVER positions to DVOP positions as of October 1, 2014; there is better coverage now by DVOP specialists and LVERs were cut back to just the workforce boards. The refocusing guidelines remove LVERs from direct service provision and DVOPs can only work with veterans who have significant barriers to employment. NCDC believes that this has worked out well. The grant team reported that veterans' staff and other NCDC staff completed numerous training sessions throughout the state to become familiar with the new rules and responsibilities, which specify a brief intake with personalized assessment and services. The majority of services will be provided by Wagner-Peyser and local area staff, who require training. At the end of the grant, the grant director had not yet discussed how to train these staff but planned to do so.

Objective 6:   Accurately track and report pilot outcomes

a.   Of the $750,000 grant award, North Carolina expended $717,500.72 in cumulative grant funds for the three grant years, July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2015. North Carolina's unobligated funding at the end of the grant is $32,499.28.

b.   The grant team has been exploring its capacity to report outcomes, including the number of Army UCX claimants receiving benefits, duration of receipt, the number contacted, the number who received AJC services, AJC services provided, and the number entering employment. These data should already be collected for performance reporting and, in fall 2014, the grant director indicated that NCDC should be able to provide outcomes information for Army UCX claimants but might have to work through data from its previous system before it converted to NC Works Online in August 2013. The actual go-live date for grant activities was late February/early March 2013. NCDC was considering generating data for each year of the grant and potentially for the year prior to the grant. The grant team planned to provide more comprehensive data on pilot activities, outputs, and outcomes and noted in its final report that it planned to so in a follow-up report, tentatively scheduled for September 2015.

In its final grant report, the team provided a partial analysis of the UCX claim counts in North Carolina prepared by the UCX/UCFE claims manager, who was also a member of the UCX Initiative Steering Committee. During the April 2013 to June 2013 period (right after the March 2013 go-live date), there were 4,011 total UCX claimants, of whom 2,568 were Army. During April 2015 to June 2015, there were 878 total UCX claimants, of whom 501 were Army. The team believed that its efforts to work with the TAP program manager at Fort Bragg had some impact on the reduction in claims by advising TAP participants of AJC services before the soldiers were released from active duty.

Objective 7:   Ensure compliance with DOL requirements

North Carolina collaborated with DOL and its contractors throughout the grant period.

C. Summary of grant experience

1.   The grant team provided an overall assessment of the **sustainability, replicability, and scalability** of the strategies North Carolina pursued under this grant. The team indicated that, in its view, key successes have been outreach and marketing, partnerships, and networking, and that these will be sustained after the grant ends. NCDC indicated that it had not coordinated with some of the participating industries before the grant; it also indicated that its partnership with NCDVR has developed and that they have a strong partnership with TAP program manager Bill McMillan. The governor's working group on veterans has been another strong partnership that would not have evolved without the networking under the grant.

The grant team indicated that several of the strategies developed with grant funding can be replicated and sustained. The North Carolina veterans' page and the Facebook page will continue to expand, and existing staff will continue to post relevant information to those pages.

2.   The grant team described the **most significant lessons learned** from this grant experience as marketing, outreach, and the use of technology in outreach. NCDC reported that

developing a starting point in social media was important and that its social media efforts will continue to grow after the end of the grant.

3.   The grant team described **what has worked well and what has not** under the grant, and what it would have done differently. NCDC staff said that the plethora of veterans services at all levels has worked well and at the same time has been a challenge. Optimally, veterans are served by a mix of services but options could be streamlined. Before the grant, NCDC was lagging in web content but that has changed significantly in the view of the grant team.

The grant team reported that, in retrospect, it would have worked to obtain more buy-in from other participants at the start of the grant. Before meeting for the first time, team members would have disseminated information about the importance of the grant objectives and the grant's focus on helping veterans find suitable employment. The team would have stressed MOS conversions and helped staff understand how this works so that they could better direct the veteran to appropriate career paths.

The team reported that it also would have considered resume-building and skill translation software, as it still sees significant issues with veterans' skills translation among human resources managers and other hiring officials. Because of the refocusing guidelines, resume-building and skills translation software would be particularly useful in that they would help Wagner-Peyser staff and others who now provide the majority of veterans' services but who may be less familiar with military service than are veterans' representatives.

The NCDC grant team reported that it continues to struggle with high staff turnover in the field. In late winter and early spring of 2015, DVOPs gathered for training and the senior ranking person in the training had only seven months' experience with the agency. The team indicated that it has learned from the initiative that it needs to do a better job of training staff, marketing, and promoting services, which are constant issues.

NCDC has an annual conference where staff receive extensive training on serving veterans, recording services, and other tasks, but it would like to train staff more frequently. NCDC planned to discuss this with the new director of veterans' services. New veterans' representatives go to NVTI for training and the team noted that a number of videos and webinars available in NC Works Online address general service provision but that none focus specifically on serving veterans. The grant team was not aware of program-specific e-learning that would serve the training need. They did note that it would be useful to have webinars; team members have discussed developing veteran-specific webinars that staff could access at any time.

A major concern of the grant team is that refocusing takes many veterans' services away from veterans' staff. Training needs to focus on developing veteran-serving skills among Wagner-Peyser staff, for example, how to look up DD-214 information and translate military skills into civilian language. The grant team reported that about 30 percent of veterans will have significant barriers to employment and the other 70 percent will be served by non-veterans' staff, so these staff must understand technology, resources, and how to translate veterans' resumes to civilian terminology. NC Works Online has an MOS converter but no automated tool to make resumes more oriented to civilian language or specific job postings.

North Carolina planned to train Wagner-Peyser staff but the grant team reported that it has to obtain approval first. It is very costly to bring NVTI to North Carolina but they may be able to train a large number of staff together. DOL and NCDC planned to discuss this further.

4.   The grant team indicated that the most **promising practices** emerging from NCDC's grant include partnerships that did not exist before the grant. In NCDC's view, other promising practices include having an in-house grant coordinator and a veterans' portal. They viewed the grant experience as a springboard for exposure to local and state partnerships, veterans' services and products, social media, and the pending grant. The team hopes to use some of the lessons learned under the Army UCX grant to prepare for the new Ready to Work grant.

APPENDIX D

TEXAS GRANT ACTIVITIES

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A. Synopsis of the state's plan

The Texas plan identified several strategies and activities to address the three major goals and the seven objectives the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) prescribed for the Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service Members (UCX) Claimants Initiative. This section summarizes the strategies and activities in the original plan and their status at the end of the grant. Texas has incorporated other activities into its grant, described in Section B.

1. Transfer of UI data to the Army

As part of the automation of the quarterly UCX payment process, Texas is sharing Army UCX claimant information from the Unemployment Insurance (UI) department with the Army so the Army can conduct analysis and identify trends.

2. Development of Texas Skills to Work

Texas used DOL, Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Workforce Information grant seed funds to work with SkillsNet Corporation to develop a detailed work activity skill library and a process for creating a skill description for job postings and resumes. When SkillsNet declined to continuing working on this application in August 2013, Texas took over its development and renamed it Texas Skills to Work. Users upload resumes; the system then creates a detailed work activity profile and matches it against online job postings. The soldier's primary military occupational specialty (MOS), collateral duties, and training jacket information are translated to skill statements that employers can understand.

3. Addition of a UCX flag

A UCX flag was added to the Work in Texas (WIT) system in March 2013. The flag can be seen by the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), the Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP), and Workforce Solution staff. While the flag was being developed, the UI division of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) ran monthly UCX claimant reports and distributed them to the directors of the TVC employment services program and TVLP, so their staffs could conduct outreach to UCX claimants and track how long claimants drew UCX.

4. Hiring additional staff

Texas called its grant the State of Texas Soldier Employment Initiative (STSEI) and hired four staff members as part of the grant. Two TVLP staff were located on Fort Hood and Fort Bliss to work with active duty soldiers, one TVC staff person worked with the Texas Army National Guard at Camp Mabry, and another TVC staff person worked with reservists at Ellington field. They conducted initial intake with soldiers planning to stay in Texas, connected those who were relocating with resources at their destination, provided transition services, and coordinated enrollment for benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Choices—Texas's WorkFirst TANF employment and training program. When TVC declined to participate in the one-year extension of the Army UCX grant, these last two staff members were no longer available to serve veterans as part of the grant.

5. Enhanced reporting for customer tracking

The grant team developed a data dashboard to track the progress of the initiative. The data dashboard includes several veterans' employment measures for TWC management's review.

6. Job fairs

TWC is establishing job fairs in conjunction with TVC, the Texas Army National Guard, employers, and other partners. TWC is also working toward establishing virtual job fairs.

7. Additional online outreach

To expand outreach, grant task force members posted information about the initiative on their web pages and provided contact information for local veteran's employment representatives (LVERs), Disabled Veterans Outreach Program representatives (DVOPs), and veterans' resources and referral specialists (VRRSs). The TWC training department developed a web-based training package on outreach.

B. Update on plan objectives

This section describes the strategies and activities implemented by the grantee, within the framework of the plan objectives; it also documents implementation challenges, proposed solutions, and next steps as of the end of the grant.

Objective 1: Develop a strong collaborative partnership among the UI system, the public workforce system, and the three components of the Army (regular, National Guard, and Reserves) to work on UCX projects

a. The grant team continues to work on improving communication and coordination of veterans' services among TVC, TVLP, and Employment Service (ES) staff. TVLP and TVC staff assigned to the Army UCX grant have access to both the TVLP's database and WIT. Usually, TVLP staff do not use WIT. WIT is the primary system into which the UCX staff members enter all their data regarding UCX claimants; a UI claim in the system establishes a shell registration for workforce services, and the claimant is notified by letter to complete the registration. There has been no change in access for TVC LVER and DVOP staff. Different data are recorded in the two systems (TVLP and WIT), so they will not be duplicative or burdensome.

b. In December 2013, ETA held a conference call with the four states participating in the Army UCX Claimants Initiative and announced the availability of one-year extensions to the original grant with revised completion dates of June 2015. The TVLP director subsequently worked with TWC leadership and staff to request the extension. TVLP submitted its extension request and received DOL approval.

As part of this process, the TVLP director notified TVC and asked if it would like to participate in the extension of the STSEI. TVC declined to participate in the extension and determined it had approximately $50,000 in grant funding to reimburse to TWC. This was to occur as a deobligation of remaining funding in the contract with TWC. TVC could have continued to participate in grant activities, but it viewed the new refocusing requirements as a heavy burden and did not feel it had the time or staffing to successfully focus on both.

c.   The grant team reported that sharing information among multiple organizations, especially in a state as large as Texas, is challenging. A task force email group was set up early in the grant to facilitate sharing of information that does not require a formal memorandum of understanding. The distribution list now includes TVC, TWC, and TVLP, National Guard, Job Connection Education Program (JCEP), Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Lone Star Veterans Association (Iraq/Afghanistan group), Forts Hood and Bliss, Soldier for Life TAP center transition managers and contractors, and others. The group is open and allows further distribution; for example, the public can access it on the Texas VFW web page. The grant director reported that the email group has facilitated collaboration across organizations during the grant although it has been challenging to keep up with changes in participants.

The taskforce email group continues to share employment openings and other information on a daily basis. TVLP gets a national listing of overseas defense contractor jobs, the National Guard knows when postings are coming up and is aware of local employers that are specifically interested in hiring veterans; the VFW and American Legion also share knowledge of job openings. The grant director reported that by the time these jobs could be posted in WIT and staff inform veterans who would be good candidates, the jobs would likely already be filled. Those involved really like the email process because it is outside the bureaucracy and is quick and informal. During the final quarter of the grant, about 100 employment opportunities outside of WIT were distributed including jobs in Texas, across the country, and overseas. New members will continue to be added to the email group to expand communications on job openings, job fairs, on-the-job training, and veterans' benefits, and to exchange contact information of the soldiers and claimants assisted by Texas staff. The grant team will also include the taskforce members during the virtual job fairs.

Objective 2:   Identify and implement innovative outreach projects

a.   **DD-214 image database.** Each military branch sends DD-214 forms to the state for transitioning service members who have an address of record in Texas. Certain information is redacted from the DD-214s, and they are sent to a contractor that scans them and returns image files that are uploaded to the TVLP database. The Army, Marines, and Navy usually send DD-214s on a timely basis; Air Force claimants have often filed for UCX before receiving their DD-214s.

STSEI and TVLP staff continue to use TVLP's DD-214 database; although the database does not interact with other systems the team reported that it is a great resource for verifying veterans' service for Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) conditional certification and for other veteran-related programs. The database is also used to provide copies of DD-214s to veterans who do not have one.

In addition, the TVLP director used the DD-214 database to analyze the number of DD-214s received in previous years to predict the number of veterans who will return to Texas during calendar year 2014 in order to better allocate resources. The DD-214s provide a reasonable predictor, though it is difficult to develop a highly accurate forecast. There are 187,207 DD-214s in the database and 161,999 SSNs. In 2012, approximately 23,000 DD-214s were received and a similar number exited, according to the TVLP director. Approximately 30 percent came through

Fort Bliss and 35 percent through Fort Hood. A number of DD-214s in the database are for the National Guard. During the first calendar quarter of 2015, 1,988 DD-214s were added to the database.

TVLP has been extended to August 2017 and the database will probably continue to be available after that. TVLP has not yet discussed how to share the database when the program ends.

Because WIT has the most accurate contact information and SSNs are easier to track in WIT than in the DD-214 database, TVLP runs the SSNs in the DD-214 database against WIT to send outreach letters to separating soldiers. The letter welcomes veterans back to Texas and tells them about the services available to them. The process involves the following:

- TVC receives the DD-214 copy #6 based on the county home of record.

- TVC strips some information for claims staff and sends the DD-214 to Nebulus for scanning. Nebulus then scans it for TWC. TWC paid for the setup to scan the stripped versions of copy #6.

- Nebulus sends images to TVLP for the database.

- TVLP sends letters using this contact information. Veterans sometimes receive these letters before they receive a copy of the DD-214.

- When letters are returned, TVLP manually checks the contact information in the DD-214 database against WIT by SSN to check if the veteran is enrolled in WIT and to confirm or update the contact information. Veterans are often found in WIT with different addresses and about 95 percent of the veterans found in the WIT search draw UCX. If the veteran has moved out of Texas, the designated regional manager contacts the veteran and tries to connect him or her with the workforce system in the new state.

Despite these efforts, a significant percent of letters are returned; in the first calendar quarter of 2015 1,988 letters were sent and 280 were returned. It is a manual process to find these people in the DD-214 database and search by SSN in WIT. The STSEI director therefore recognized the need to change the way TVLP and STSEI staff reach out to UCX claimants. Each month, TVLP and STSEI staff conducted a mass email, letter, and telephone campaign for more than 1,000 Army UCX claimants. A new policy is being implemented in response to refocusing guidelines. TVLP will break down the UCX list by total Army UCX claimants and Army UCX claimants who are still active in WIT. The policy sets a three-month period in which VRRS will conduct outreach only to Army UCX claimants who have an active account in WIT. During the site visit, the grant director reported that the email process results in some responses from veterans; staff craft their own text to introduce themselves and a wide range of services including employment. Staff also send text messages to veterans.

b. **Out-of-state claimants.** TVLP has designated a regional manager who reaches out to all Army UCX claimants who draw UCX from Texas but live in a different state. The regional manager contacts these claimants to check on their status and find out what assistance he can provide. This is a manual process for a small number of claimants (approximately 20 to 25); staff manually identify UCX claimants who are from other states and who are in WIT. The grant

project manager then sends this information to the state director for employment and veterans services and to the regional manager, who contacts the claimants.

c.   **Concurrent UCX/GI Bill benefits.** In Texas, veterans can receive UCX and post-9/11 GI Bill benefits concurrently. A high percentage of veterans receive GI Bill benefits. Receipt of GI Bill benefits is annotated manually in WIT; TWC would need data from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to confirm these benefits and to accurately measure the percentage of concurrent UCX/GI Bill recipients. TWC informs veterans of the pros and cons of drawing UCX for extended periods of time, including while receiving GI Bill benefits. A TWC outreach goal is to encourage veterans to work while in school so that future employers will not question gaps in employment, and to speed the transition to civilian employment. It is difficult to measure achievement of this goal without VA benefits data; however, the grant project director indicated that the program has had mixed success. His perception is that veterans' receptivity to working while receiving GI Bill benefits depends on veterans' geographic area and the buying power of the UCX benefits in each area. However, the Fort Hood transition services manager noted that the ability to draw UCX and GI Bill benefits at the same time is very important for soldiers trying to attend school, especially if they have a family to support.

The grant director also indicated during the site visit that he would like to improve coordination so that veterans receiving GI Bill benefits are not also using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training funds that could benefit someone else; similarly, he would like to speed the process by which separated service members who are dislocated receive WIA training.

d.   **PII receipt.** The TVLP director indicated that the state would like to receive personally identifiable information (PII) from the military to work with soldiers six months before separation, which is the point at which TVLP has found the most success in garnering interest and participation. TVLP and STSEI staff continue to work and build relationships with the transition center managers and staff at Fort Bliss and Fort Hood.

e.   **TWC websites.** The TWC commissioner was able to secure $275,000 to create and update TWC's websites for veterans and employers – Texas Wide Open for Veterans (https://www.texaswideopenforveterans.com) and Texas Wide Open for Business (https://texaswideopenforbusiness.com). Facebook pages for each of these efforts were also created. TWC is trying to attract more service members to stay in Texas upon discharge and others to come to Texas because there are many jobs to fill.

TWC is considering further outreach to those outside of Texas through marketing in the *Military Times*, which is distributed in post exchanges worldwide and online. TWC reported working with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, which has a nationwide initiative to link all states' veterans' pages together. The chamber is also connecting with DOL veterans' directors and others.

f.   **Job fairs.** TWC is conducting local and regional job fairs in conjunction with TVC, the Texas Army National Guard, and employers. TWC holds these job fairs at armories to connect employers with the local military community and to keep costs down.

The grant team reported that it will continue to work closely with Hiring Our Heroes on planning, coordinating, and executing job fairs. The team has been able to get the business service units of local workforce boards more involved in recruiting employers and working at the Hiring Our Heroes job fairs. The Texas grant team will continue to market information about upcoming job fairs to employers during TWC's Texas Business Conferences and the Governor's Small Business Forums. The grant team reported that turnout at the job fairs has been strong and the WIBs provide outstanding support. Several job fairs were held in 2014; at a job fair in late September 2014 12 veterans obtained job offers and 20 received follow-up offers. The Red, White, and You job fair in November 2014 involved 9,700 veterans and 1,700 employers; this job fair was a joint effort between TWC, TVC, 28 workforce boards, and military installations. The VFW job fair in June 2015 was a collaborative effort between state agencies, the workforce development board, VFW, and employers. The grant team reported that 64 employers and 595 veterans participated and approximately 40 job offers were made. The VFW is interested in holding a job fair at its annual convention every year.

The TVLP director coordinates with TWC's UI department to mail informational letters to UCX claimants of all branches within a certain proximity of upcoming job fairs. For the June 18, 2014, Fort Hood Mega Summer Job Fair, the department sent more than 1,300 letters to claimants within 200 miles of Fort Hood. TVLP's strategy of mailing letters from the UI department aims to get veterans to open the letter and read about the job fair. Benefits are not cut off if they do not attend, but the goal is to try to counter any tendency among veteran claimants to draw UCX until benefits are exhausted. TVLP believes that part of the challenge with transitioning to civilian employment is this mind-set. The TVLP director received more than 40 calls from veterans who had received the Mega Summer Job Fair letter and had questions. It is hard to measure how many letter recipients actually come to the job fairs because staff at the fairs do not ask attendees if they received the letters. Some veterans have traveled more than 2.5 hours to attend job fairs.

During the site visit, the grant director reported that he was helping organize job fairs with the American Legion and other veteran service organizations, including the VFW. The grant team is trying to get veteran service organizations involved in employment again after being absent from that arena for quite some time, because veterans are connected to an extremely wide range of organizations. The team also noted that veterans complain that at job fairs some employers ask veterans to apply online in addition to communicating at the job fair because that is how they manage all applications; the team noted that this is unlikely to change given how companies manage their hiring processes.

During the site visit, the grant director indicated that the grant team is always looking for veteran-friendly employers; he reported that since 2012 Texas's recovery from the recession has helped the team identify such employers and organize the hiring fairs. Grant staff are also diligent about working with LVERs to identify federal contractors in local areas and ascertaining their interest in hiring veterans. The grant director noted that 63 employers applied for a small American Legion job fair, exceeding the fair's capacity and requiring that some employers be turned away.

The grant director also noted that the grant team is organizing all job fairs and related events across the state into a single calendar accessible to everyone.

g.   **Virtual job fairs.** TWC is working through procurement to obtain a license from a vendor to host up to seven virtual job fairs in a year. The virtual job fairs will target veterans, especially those who receive UCX. The cost for a one-year license is $7,000. The team reported plans to conduct a virtual job fair in September or October 2015.

Virtual job fairs occur on a certain date and time online, for example in the Gulf Coast, Midland, Odessa, and so on. There are many well-paying jobs in the oil and gas industries in these areas. In San Antonio, there are manufacturing and administrative jobs. The virtual fairs are free for employers and are conducted as either big periodic events or more-frequent targeted events. The grant team reported that WIBs will be involved throughout the process. For each virtual job fair, there will be a targeted website and interviews via a chat function.

Some veterans find virtual job fairs challenging because they require speaking into a camera. To address these challenges, the grant team reported that there will be classes with veterans before the job fairs, either the morning of or the day before the fair. For a virtual job fair, staff ensure in advance that the veterans are dressed professionally in suits. Staff have found more issues with active duty military at these fairs, although the issues differ for each group of claimants.

h.   **Additional outreach.** The TWC training department developed a web-based training package on outreach. The initial training was in two parts, covering different categories of UCX and dealing with UCX claimants who are already drawing benefits. The program focuses on Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, but also covers topics needed for helping others. TVLP staff have received this training, as has a larger group of about 175 LVER and DVOP staff. The National Veterans Training Institute will train all 20 to 22 TVLP staff as part of the refocusing effort. Those staff will train the board members and cover outreach to Army UCX claimants. There is a gap in training because of refocusing—ES staff do not know about these issues yet though they will be serving more Army UCX and other veteran claimants under the new rules.

TWC developed a flyer to walk service members and UCX claimants through the filing process; the flyer includes links to WIT, TVLP, American Job Center (AJC) locations, Texas Skills to Work and other useful resources. The flyer was still in the approval process at the end of the grant.

Grant task force members posted information about the initiative on their web pages and provided contact information for LVERs, DVOPs, and veterans' resources and referral specialists (VRRSs).

i.   **National Guard survey.** The Texas Army National Guard sends a survey to units while they are deployed to identify soldiers who will be unemployed when they return in 4 to 6 months. For the past several years, Texas Army National Guard has shared this information with the TVLP. TVLP staff email the deployed soldiers with the goal of building relationships with them and working on the employment process. Texas considered adapting the model to the Army Reserve and adapting the survey for use with active duty soldiers who are 7 to 10 months from separation. However, this strategy no longer seemed feasible to the grant team from a resource perspective. There has not been time to pursue it, and not many active duty units will be

deployed. It might be worthwhile to develop a test survey for a deployed Army Reserve unit; demobilizations are in process with many reserves coming through Texas.

j.   **Coordination with TAP.** During the Texas site visit, the grant team reported making strides in coordinating with the officers responsible for transitioning soldiers at Fort Bliss and Fort Hood. The contractor running the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in Texas resists having outside organizations participate in TAP; Texas workforce staff do not participate in TAP but are located right outside the classroom so that they can help class participants. The team reported that participants became aware over time that they were available to help and increasingly sought them out.

A related issue reported by the grant director and team is that previously commanders could pull soldiers out of TAP/ACAP if they thought the soldier would not take it seriously or if they wanted the soldier to work on something else. As a result, some soldiers received only a day or so of the program. This was a concern, as it is critical for soldiers to receive transition information, particularly those who take things less seriously and may not have started making plans. The grant director reported that as a result of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act, unit commanders are now responsible for soldiers' attendance. An ongoing concern is that soldiers who are discharged with "chapters," for example a Chapter 10 discharge in lieu of a court-martial or a Chapter 14 discharge for misconduct, may only receive an abbreviated version of TAP.

The team also expressed concern about the "generic" nature of TAP. They recommended adding specific instruction on how state workforce systems are set up, how transitioning service members should register for services in the state where they will settle, and how to navigate those services. They also recommended adding specific information about UCX; the team reported that currently soldiers are told to file for UCX when they return home. They do not receive any information about eligibility for UCX, and how UCX coordinates with GI Bill benefits and VA-approved training. Grant team members often see veterans who apply for UCX but are not eligible for it and are not prepared when their claim is denied. To help eliminate confusion, the grant team has collaborated with the Texas UI department on a one-page UCX flyer for separating soldiers that explains the process. The team has found that National Guard and reservists receive a larger share of UCX payments than regular Army veterans, and the majority of UCX claimants are in base cities, so the team is working to increase collaboration accordingly.

During the site visit, the Fort Hood transition assistance team described its frustrations with the TAP contractor. Although the team perceived that the class is well taught, contractor staff are only required to show up and teach. They will not provide any assistance with setting up or cleaning up after the class; this is a major burden for the staff on base. The Fort Hood team described this as an issue only with the TAP contractor, not with other DOL contractors. The process involves transferring shipped books to the training site, unpacking them and setting them out in the classroom, breaking down boxes, setting up easels and markers, and then cleaning everything up afterward. Fort Hood receives approximately 150 cases of TAP books at a time and it has run out of storage space at times. The team recommended that DOL provide PDFs of the TAP training materials (available at http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap.htm) to attendees as an alternative to paper books; this would save printing costs and soldiers would prefer it.

Because the soldiers are getting ready to move, they do not typically want to save the printed TAP materials. At one time, soldiers had a practice of throwing the books out of their car windows onto a pile that was initially created when books slid off the car roofs of soldiers who forgot the books there when leaving. The transition team estimated that they go through 11,000 pages of paper per week for the TAP class.

Additional concerns expressed by the Fort Hood transition team include the generic nature of the class, as noted by the grant team, and the shortage of financial counselors. All soldiers must develop a resume and submit a job application, but the process is not tailored for soldiers who are going to school or starting their own business who do not need to apply for a job at that time. The resumes developed as deliverables during TAP do not have to follow standard formats and do not meet the expectations of AJC staff. The transition services manager noted that resumes will become more of an issue going forward because Soldier for Life will require resumes throughout the soldier's life cycle, for example when the soldier applies for advanced course work while in service. Currently, the perception is that most soldier's resumes are very poorly done, which reinforces the need to establish standards for resumes and to tailor them to soldiers' specific plans. The shortage of financial counselors is also a serious issue because soldiers need to understand how to budget after separation when the Army is not providing housing, health care, and other benefits. The transition services manager reflected that he would rather have his own staff teach the class, given the current situation. He would also like to see TWC staff participate in TAP by explaining UCX eligibility to separating soldiers; as noted by the grant team, there is a belief that all soldiers are eligible for TAP, which can lead to problems after separation.

The transition assistance manager further described concerns with the "warm handover" in which high-risk transitioning service members should be physically turned over to someone at DOL or VA. Because this would require even more intensive participation in TAP by high-risk veterans, Fort Hood addresses this by telling soldiers where to meet the STSEI staff person. Typically, the STSEI staffer stays near the TAP class all day on Tuesdays to be available. The Fort Hood manager indicated that there is no way to do a warm handover with dishonorable discharges given the speed at which these individuals must leave the installation and the steps involved in the dishonorable discharge process.

The transition assistance team at Camp Mabry concurred with the Fort Hood team's general assessment of TAP, calling it "death by PowerPoint;" the Camp Mabry team also agreed that it should be run locally because the information provided is too generic to be of use. Camp Mabry staff described the Centurian Military Alliance (CMA) program as very well run and effective, in contrast to TAP. The program focuses on resumes and conducts mock interviews. Participants meet hiring managers and must practice a 90-second "elevator" speech until they perfect it. CMA includes a VIP dinner with employers who are hiring. The Camp Mabry team described CMA as a small Texas-based effort that has also worked outside the state.

Objective 3:   Develop service delivery strategies that enhance reemployment services and improve the employment outcomes of UCX claimants

a.   **STSEI staff on base.** Four STSEI staff members (two TVLP, two TVC) were hired to work at Fort Hood (active duty), Fort Bliss (active duty), Ellington Field (reserve), and Camp

Mabry (National Guard), received two days of training in May 2013, and met with the executive director of each agency. Among the topics covered in the training were WOTCs, WIT tracking, number of outreaches, outcomes, and use of the air cards they were issued for use on the installations.

Because TVC decided not to participate in the grant extension, TWC consolidated staff positions, leaving two TVLP STSEI staff working on Fort Bliss and Fort Hood. Because Texas is down to two staff from four, the grant director believes there is an impact on Army UCX claimants. The two staff work with the transition center manager and others to find out who is staying in Texas, register them in WIT, and start the employment and training process. STSEI staff try to meet with every separating service member interested in staying in Texas, but that is not feasible given the volume of separations at these locations. Fort Bliss and Fort Hood accommodate large numbers of separating soldiers; the grant team reported that they could use many more than two staff. Texas believes this is a model that all military installations should implement.

STSEI staff continue to build relationships with National Guard, Army Reserve Command, and other support channels on all levels including Guard- and Reserve-specific programs. Staff are conducting after-action reviews (AARs) to determine best practices, challenges, and changes needed regarding how the STSEI is working with the National Guard and Army Reserve. AARs are an ongoing process similar to a debriefing; they are conducted approximately twice a year in different areas. AARs are also held for job fairs. As a result of AAR lessons learned so far, the team reported that STSEI staff have done the following:

- They have changed the policy for contacting separating soldiers so that TVLP contacts only those who are active in WIT.

- They have established offices on post at both Fort Bliss and Fort Hood, although Fort Hood is very crowded.

- To facilitate systems access while on post, two important work-arounds were designed. Air cards were provided to the four STSEI staff members to access the Internet while on Army installations or at armories because the Army's information technology policy does not allow external computers to log into its network. The air cards enable the STSEI staff to gain access to WIT. Another tool enables staff to store information for later download into the TVLP database.

- Job fairs should not be held on installations because of security issues; people cannot attend job fairs on installations unless they are on previously submitted lists or have ongoing access.

Texas has not been able to achieve its goal of obtaining personally identifiable information from the military and facilitating sharing of individual-level data. The staff person at Fort Bliss had access to individual-level data for military personnel, but only as a service provider; he could not access lists of personnel before they separate.

The workflow for the transition office at Fort Bliss is roughly as follows: 100 transitioning soldiers are briefed every Monday morning; approximately 50 percent plan to move to other states; 30 percent stay in Texas; and 10 percent stay in El Paso. The STSEI staff person meets

with each transitioning soldier and reviews the WIT services available, employment programs, and the industries the veteran might be interested in after separating from the military. He works with the Workforce Opportunity Services partner for displaced veterans. The team reported that from April 1, 2015, to June 30, 2015, the STSEI staff at Fort Bliss participated in six events, reached out to 550 soldiers, and individually assisted 215 soldiers. Going forward, activity is expected to remain at a high level.

The site visitor received the following additional information regarding the on-post STSEI staff during the Texas site visit. In winter 2013/2014, the Fort Bliss transition service manager and transition employment liaison gave the STSEI staff person an office in the same building and access to his staff. This worked well—collaboration was very strong at all levels and across agencies until spring 2015, when all outside participation in TAP was halted, including STSEI involvement in the classes and partnering with the Association of the United States Army on marketing and networking with employers. This reversed the progress made in cross-agency collaboration and service to veterans. The grant director has tried to collaborate with the new Fort Bliss transition service manager to reinstate the prior arrangement, but does not anticipate making progress until there is a higher-level command to do so. The grant director has been able to collaborate with the new transition service manager in other ways, for example, by conducting outreach regarding job fairs to UCX claimants within 100 miles of Fort Bliss and listing Texas Skills to Work on outreach flyers. Fort Bliss transitions up to 800 service members per month.

Prior to this change in policy at Fort Bliss, the STSEI staff person had been able to introduce himself and the services he provides to transitioning soldiers. He would explain that he could also connect transitioning soldiers to services in other states. Since the change in policy, the STSEI staff member said that traffic in his office is down 50 percent. Some of the on-base counselors will mention him to soldiers. In addition to working with individuals, the STSEI staff person attends job fairs and speaks with employers and schools. However, he indicated that he would like to be able to continue the 5-minute briefings in TAP sessions so that he can connect with service members and accurately describe the services available to them. He finds that soldiers he meets now do not have adequate information after completing TAP because it is generic and not specific to the state. The STSEI staff would also like receive a list of people who are transitioning when they are participating in workshops so that he can conduct outreach; even a blind email list of class participants that he could use for outreach would help him connect transitioning soldiers to services in Texas. The STSEI staff gave the example of a recent client who was planning to move to Tennessee to pursue equine therapy; he was able to provide her with information on property tax exemptions, agricultural and timber exemptions, and a homestead deduction available to veterans in Texas that she was unaware of and that changed the financial considerations of her plan dramatically. He is able to cater to the needs of clients and indicated that providing more staff in his role on installations would benefit veterans.

The volume of activity at Fort Hood is significant; the Fort Hood transition services manager and specialist noted during the site visit that 600 to 900 soldiers transition per month. Fort Hood is centrally located and was developed to transition up to 11,750 soldiers annually. Between May 7, 2015, and June 30, 2015, the STSEI staff person participated in six mini-job fairs, conducted 80 Capstone briefings, reached out to 788 soldiers, and individually assisted 68 soldiers. Fort Hood operates TAP 5 days per week 47 weeks of the year, and averages 250 soldiers per week. The five-day program includes one day on veterans' benefits; one day on

transition services, civilian language, financial counseling, and developing a transition budget; and three days led by the TAP contractor. The transition services manager reported that Food Hood offers several other classes as well and that soldiers spend about 22 days of their final 12 months in various transition programs. These services do not apply to "chapter" and medical separations; the manager reported that the rate of these separating soldiers is relatively high and that they receive as many services as Fort Hood can provide in the time available. Space is limited on Fort Hood, so space at a community college is also being used. During Mathematica's May site visit, the Fort Hood transition service manager offered the STSEI program office space in the transition center.

The Fort Hood transition assistance team reported that post-separation, only a small number of veterans typically seek services at the installation and that they usually show up when UCX benefits are about to run out or they are in financial distress. The team reported that these veterans can be confused about the distinction between the military and workforce services; those who are forced out tend to be very angry with the Army and as a result can be very reluctant to connect with workforce services. The transition team also noted that approximately 55 percent of soldiers on base are married, yet they rarely involve their spouses in the transition planning. It is important for these soldiers to connect with workforce services before transition because they seem less likely to return to base later when they need help finding a job. To that end, the Fort Hood transition staff and on-base STSEI staff distribute a newsletter in online and paper formats to all transitioning service members; this newsletter references military and workforce system employment services and other benefits and is available at https://www.sfl-tap.army.mil/. The team reported that transitioning soldiers typically receive services at Fort Hood or at the AJC but not both locations at the same time. The base transition center has a very high turnover, losing about 2 or 3 staff per month of 30 because staff tend to be spouses of military members.

The grant team noted in its final report that it plans to keep STSEI staff on Fort Hood and Fort Bliss after the grant ends; they will revert the staff to the TVLP but retain the same mission. The grant director noted during the site visit that the military needs to focus more on the transition to civilian employment, with more time to work with service members on this transition. A more established process is needed in which state workforce services staff can begin working with the service member before transition, with access to contact information to ensure follow-up. If the service member is transitioning to another area, workforce staff should provide the contact information to the relevant AJC, ensuring the AJC can reach out to the service member. There is no lack of information about services to veterans but there is confusion about how to connect to the most appropriate services; for example, when Hero 2 Hired was active it required veterans to register separately from their employment services registration, which was confusing for some. Early outreach to service members can help address these issues.

b.   **Pilot certification programs.** The Army is piloting programs at Fort Hood that will enable soldiers to receive certifications in pipefitting, auto mechanics, and Microsoft programs. The TVLP director and several other veterans' service providers and employers met with the director for the central region of the Army's Soldier for Life program. The meeting was very positive with a good exchange of information; however, working through the bureaucracy is required to get these pilots going. The pilot programs are a good segue for the Army's Soldier for Life program; there is also a Marine for Life program, and both work individually with those

requiring help. The grant team reported that the approach is strategic, with the Army making a higher-level effort because more veterans are being pushed through early releases; the Army is attracting the early release soldiers and trying to provide them with training before they separate. However, the Army wants employers to pay the training costs, which is difficult. More soldiers would be involved if training used GI Bill funding; the TVLP director predicts that doing so could generate a huge increase. Community colleges around military installations enable soldiers to study for six months before separation. The TVLP believes this approach makes sense and is a move in the right direction. Going forward, STSEI staff will start to validate the concepts of this pilot project through AARs, and—if they find components that are not working—will try other approaches.

During the Texas site visit, the grant director described related initiatives, including a waiver of the driving test for veterans with certain kinds of military drivers' licenses who are pursuing a commercial driver's license (CDL). Insurance companies do not recognize years of military experience driving trucks or that the military license is a class A CDL when setting rates, so firms are charging as much to insure these experienced drivers as they would someone who had just begun driving. Many employers require drivers they hire to attend a commercial truck driving school even if they are already licensed. Although many truck-driving schools will accept GI Bill funding, some require veterans to cover lodging expenses during the course, which unemployed veterans sometimes cannot afford. The grant team reported coordinating with schools, bases, and others to resolve these issues.

The grant director also described a state college program for military medics to receive civilian certifications. It has been difficult getting all schools to count military experience toward course credit; the director described this as greed on the part of schools for GI Bill funds. In addition, the grant team noted that many military medics would like to switch to different fields. Central Texas College built a database to identify what military experience will be honored by various institutions for those pursuing civilian certifications, to reduce the time that veterans would need to stay in school. As of the time of the site visit, the state legislature had just reauthorized this initiative. The Fort Hood transition services manager also noted the importance of this program.

During the site visit, the Fort Hood transition assistance manager noted that his team used COOL (Credentialing Opportunities On-Line) to help Army soldiers find information on certifications and licenses related to their MOS codes. According to its website, "COOL explains how Soldiers can meet civilian certification and license requirements and provides links to numerous resources to help get them started."

c. **Capstone.** The Texas grant team continues to have challenges defining and implementing the Capstone process. Capstone is supposed to be a verification that the service member meets career readiness standards and has a viable individual transition plan, with a warm handoff to the VA, DOL, or another appropriate agency for service members who need assistance meeting those standards. The grant team reported that many service members who should be served by this process are not. The STSEI staff provide information on the AJCs and other activities just as they did before; they felt that Capstone might simply be a new name for the same approach.

During the site visit, the grant team reported that the emphasis on Capstone seems to have been lost. The grant director recommends a set process as part of the Capstone requirements in which workforce services staff in the vicinity of the base can start working with soldiers and register them for services; ideally, service members would be required to register for services as part of this step if they had not already done so. The AJC can provide localized information to soldiers staying in the area, or, ideally, provide the soldier's contact information to the AJC in the area where the soldier is moving. The grant director suggested that this needs to be a requirement or else it will not happen. He clarified that the STSEI at Fort Bliss developed a sheet listing information on each state's workforce system that he gives to separating soldiers. He recommended that DOL and e-benefits provide listings such as this with links to all state workforce systems.

The transition services team at Fort Hood also reflected on Capstone during the site visit. This program is the only way to produce the soldier's Form 2958 transition plan checklist. The team believes the process must have been piloted at a small site because it involves retaining signed paper copies, even though an electronic version exists; this translates to a significant volume of paper at Fort Hood. The transition team reported that because of Fort Hood's large volume of transitioning soldiers, they receive calls from installations around the country asking how they handle certain processes at such a large scale.

d. **AJCs near installations.** The site visit included discussions with AJC staff located near military installations, including the Killeen AJC, which is immediately outside of Fort Hood, and the Round Rock AJC, which is further away. The Killeen AJC tends to service active duty, transitioning service members and their families, whereas the Round Rock AJC tends to serve those who have already separated. Staff at the Killeen AJC reported involvement in the Army UCX Claimants Initiative since the beginning of the grant. They initially conducted outreach to more than 2,000 veterans to inform them of the initiative; they reported that the response, especially to email outreach, was very strong. During the past three years, the Killeen staff reported developing a stronger relationship with the ACAP/Soldier for Life team because transition resources had increased. According to Killeen staff, the two groups have a strong relationship; they partner on job fairs, participate in Capstone briefings, and refer customers to each other. The team agreed with other informants that TAP used to provide more useful information before the current contractor's tenure; when the AJC was more involved, it would bring in businesses, technical and four-year schools, and employers targeting transitioning service members so that the soldiers could understand employers' expectations. The TAP contractor does not permit AJC staff to present in TAP; for example, they were not even permitted to present on the Texas Skills to Work tool. Killeen AJC staff are on base on Tuesdays to work with transitioning soldiers, connect them with AJCs in their new destinations, and refer spouses to ES staff or family career advisors.

The Killeen staff conduct outreach to all transitioning service members who file for UI and are monetarily eligible, sending a letter notifying them to come to the AJC on a specified day. In this way, Killeen staff are able to serve transitioning service members before they receive unemployment benefits; they reported that this process yields a 48 percent show rate and, in some cases, keeps veterans from having to receive unemployment benefits. In addition, when staff meet service members who are eligible for UCX but not receiving it, they make sure to direct the service members to TWC to file during their eligibility period. The AJC also serves

soldiers who have just finished TAP and helps them develop civilian resumes. Although TAP discusses civilian resumes and aids soldiers in creating one, these soldiers' resumes are often not sufficient for a civilian job search.

e.   **Texas Skills to Work.** Texas's implementation plan featured development and implementation of SkillsPass, a program that translates the wording of military-oriented resumes into more civilian terms. SkillsPass identifies civilian work activities that mirror military skills and matches them with job postings calling for these skills. The intention was for TVC, TVLP, JCEP, ESGR, and some employers to use SkillsPass to address the military-skills translation issue from the perspectives of both employers and job seekers. SkillsPass was in beta testing by summer 2013. However, its developers stopped working on the program in August 2013 and left TWC with an incomplete application.

TWC proceeded to develop its own application—Texas Skills to Work (TSTW)—to provide the functionality contemplated for SkillsPass. TSTW is available at TexasSkillstoWork.com. It rolled out this application to TVC in March 2014, initially only to obtain feedback so that updates could be made. Staff from TVLP, TVC, Fort Bliss, and Fort Hood's TVLP, Army Transition Center, JCEP, and VA have field tested the Detailed Work Activity Military Translation Tool within TSTW. They liked certain features and raised some questions. Field testers found the tool easy to use and liked detailed work activity profiles; they reported that it is very easy to navigate to a resume and easier than a manual review process. Veterans have also been given the link to use TSTW, and their response so far has been positive. The grant team surveyed 139 veterans, TAP counselors, and workforce staff, asking what they useful found in TSTW and what they would change. Users wanted the overall navigation to be easier as well as the incorporation of text information boxes to help them understand how to use the program. More user-friendly updates were made and tested, and the updated TSTW was released in early June 2015. The grant team noted in its final report that during June there were more than 800 working sessions in TSTW, a significant increase in activity compared with the prior release.

The grant team worked with TWC's labor market and communication departments to complete the development of TSTW and the marketing plan for its use. The weekly Soldier for Life-TAP Newsletter includes information on TSTW, as well as on WIT and WOTC.

TSTW interfaces with WIT and a national job board, Help Wanted Online (HWO), which together list approximately 200,000 jobs; TWC purchased a usage license for HWO so that TWC could pull materials from it. Veterans can upload their resumes and the program creates statements from it about the skills the individual possesses. The program matches these skills with appropriate job postings and ranks the strength of the matches.

TSTW is based on O*NET codes, and it also reads the text language of the skills. A user enters his or her MOS code, and TSTW identifies both relevant civilian job titles and skills that would have been developed in that position. The team reported that TSTW is more comprehensive than just an MOS search because it allows users to enter additional duties and functional skills. Used together, there can be a broader match to more positions than from a search based solely on MOS code. The grant team indicated that TSTW is a very useful tool that handles a large share of the resume-writing process when staff are working with veterans, and that TSTW can also be used by veterans on their own.

In comparing O*NET and My Next Move with TSTW, the grant project director indicated that O*NET and My Next Move have little information on combat-related MOSs and that Military.com is a bit more comprehensive. The grant team also perceives that veterans are confused about when to use these tools. The team indicated that it would be useful if skills translation were a higher priority for DoD. It would like to see a DoD-led translation of MOS codes and training histories to SOC codes. The team learned in the early stages of the grant that a University of Pennsylvania researcher developed such a translator under a grant with DoD, but the military partners did not ultimately connect them to this resource.

The employer side of TSTW was on hold for a while due to internal issues including staff retirements, but during the site visit, the grant team reported that it is planning to test, debug, and then post the employer link. The employer side of TSTW will address employer complaints about "milspeak" by helping employers to translate MOS codes and military resumes to civilian terms. The grant team indicated that groups of employers have asked for functionality to allow them to target their job postings to particular military personnel and be more accessible to veterans by creating job postings that will use MOS codes and military terminology to identify the types of applicants they are seeking and the descriptions of the jobs. TWC's human resources department already uses TSTW in the hiring process. The grant team views it as a useful application that could be adopted by other states because the online help wanted can be adjusted for each state.

During the site visit, the grant director reported on plans to collaborate with Texas State Technical College, which conducts surveys of employers asking what skills they seek and how they label job positions. They would like to incorporate those responses into TSTW to refine the matching code.

f.   **RESEA.** The grant team reported during the site visit that state law limits its ability to comply with UIPL13-15. The Texas state legislature meets biannually, so it cannot modify its state law until the 2017 legislative session. The state did not apply for the associated grant funding and currently targets for REA services only those who are likely to exhaust benefits.

Objective 4:   Identify and implement innovative data-sharing projects

a.   As required by Training and Employment Notice 20-12, the quarterly UCX payment process was converted to an electronic file transfer to the Army UCX management office at Fort Knox, Kentucky. This electronic transfer has been in place since January 2013. The data exchange has been enhanced and automated to send initial claims data to the Army through a secure file transfer protocol. This transfer includes the name, SSN, claim date, and reason for separation. The billing exchange has also been enhanced to include an address along with name, benefits paid, and SSN. From the TWC's perspective, data transfers for the UCX billing process are running smoothly. Texas uses a platform that decreases the time to pay UCX claimants across military branches, and allows for automatic payments and faster protests of claims. There was already some electronic exchange of DD-214 data that Texas obtains through the Internet Connectivity Online Network System (ICON).

The DD-214 indicates a veteran's service branch and component; these data are captured from the DD-214 and stored individually. None of these data get pulled into WIT, but UI staff

can see the information. AJC staff can see whether the veteran reported branch and component in his or her WIT registration. Texas indicated that only basic data are received back from the Federal Claims Control Center (FCCC), and that it is not a source of additional data.

During the Texas site visit, the grant team reported that it is concerned about the parallel process of sending UCX data to the U.S. Military Academy, Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis and plans to end the practice. This office uses the data for analysis and reported to the grant team that it cannot receive the data directly from the Army.

b.   Each veterans' service provider partnering in the Army UCX grant has different systems to record its veterans' employment performance measures. TVC and TVLP use WIT. Employment specialists from JCEP with the National Guard and the ESGR use their own tracking systems. Texas met with JCEP and ESGR to determine how to handle reporting during the grant. They decided that since all UCX claimants must be registered in WIT, that database would be the basis for reporting.

The grant team reported that these programs work well together and share data so they can understand what services have been provided and ensure there is no double counting. The grant team can identify the Army UCX claimants with whom JCEP, ESGR, and Lone Star Veterans have worked and ensure they are registered on WorkInTexas.com. If the STSEI director can tie services given by JCEP, ESGR, and Lone Star Veterans to Army UCX claimants who have wages in on record, these claimants are included in performance measures.

Finding a single automation system for all partner organizations remains a challenge, because it would require sharing across systems and allowing greater access to WIT. Other than Excel spreadsheets, there is no immediate solution given the number of legal agreements that would be required. However, TWC reported that it will continue to look for more efficient ways of sharing Army UCX claimants' data across the taskforce.

c.   There is an effort among DOL, the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, and five states (the District of Columbia, Georgia, Nebraska, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin) to develop hosted solutions through ICON, the FCCC system, to incorporate claim and billing information, similar to a system that Georgia developed. In addition to its military application, ICON is a hub for federal, interstate combined wage, and other data.

Objective 5:   Reinforcing implementation of priority of service

a.   Veterans eligible for POS are identified at the point of registration through a series of questions that ask about each of the eligibility criteria individually. A flag for POS eligibility appears on their records and is visible to all staff members who pull up a veteran's record in WIT. A technical advisory bulletin was issued to reinforce POS and to emphasize identifying Army UCX claimants.

b.   Texas is also working to incorporate the new guidance in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 19-13 regarding refocused responsibilities of DVOP specialists and LVERs funded by JVSG grant funds. TWC and TVLP staff are identifying ways to help implement the refocusing guidance while still providing high quality employment services to veterans and UCX claimants. This guidance is viewed as challenging and disruptive to implement because it

modifies which AJC staff can see certain customers, removes the LVERs from serving recently separated veterans, and has affected Army UCX claimants. In addition to seeing those with significant barriers to employment, a DVOP can see 18- to 24-year-olds. If veterans are without specified significant barriers or do not fall into that age group, they are seen by Employment Services staff. However, there is a training lag for the ES staff. Some AJC staff noted that there seems to be a misperception about the capacity of ES staff to take on this additional workload. The grant project director reported devoting considerable effort to developing a triage tool to use in AJCs to guide customer flow and ensure compliance with the new rules; this quick tips tool is attached to this appendix.

Objective 6:   Accurate tracking and reporting of pilot outcomes

    a.   As of the end of the grant, Texas had expended $748,182.95 in cumulative grant funds. Of the $750,000 grant award, unobligated grant funding for Texas was $1,817.05.

    b.   The grant team reported that grantee stakeholders are satisfied with the Army UCX flag added to WIT for this initiative. It is used to identify clients in WIT, conduct analysis, and respond to legislative requests. An orange icon was added to WIT on March 21, 2013 to represent Army. (An American flag symbolizes a veteran.) A UCX flag covers all branches in the TVLP database and can be used to estimate the number of military claimants served. The Army UCX icon is generated from the Army employer account number (EAN) and other indications that the person is an Army UCX claimant. The UI department consistently uses military EANs for claimants; WIT scrapes EANs from the UI system.

    The Army UCX flag appears on every record and can be searched for in several functions. WIT uses various kinds of flags; the Army UCX flags are recognized and used by all types of staff, including greeters at the entrances of the AJCs. The flag also enables searches and reports, such as one on all people who filed claims that day and which of them were Army UCX claimants. The grant team noted in its final report that after the end of the Army UCX grant, it will retain the UCX flag but expand it to cover all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. AJC staff also recommended the inclusion of a transitioning service member flag.

    TVLP tracks data in a database separate from WIT. There is a block in TVLP to capture UCX as a data field, not a flag. The grant team is considering whether to make this field branch-specific in TVLP and whether to add more branch specific icons. In TVLP, the UCX field indicates a user with whom the staff needs to work—a veteran drawing UI, for example, in the 18 to 24 age group. As Texas implements refocusing guidelines, these data will be very helpful in identifying which users to serve first.

    c.   Texas initially planned to develop quarterly reports showing the number of UCX claimants by category, the number contacted, services provided, and employment or training status confirmed. Texas instead developed a data dashboard for TWC management that pulls in data on UCX claimants and presents it clearly for TWC managers; a copy of the dashboard for the final quarter of the grant is incorporated into this appendix. The dashboard includes approximately 10 to 12 high-level measures, including the number of new UCX claims each month, number completing a transition assistance program, number receiving outreach, number receiving staff-assisted services, number entering employment in the quarter after services based

on wage records, number of WOTCs related to these employed people, and average UCX claims durations in weeks. Texas used the TVLP UCX data and the WIT Army UCX flag to create analyses to populate the dashboard. The state is trying to use the dashboard to articulate what is occurring in a simplified way; it has a small staff with many veterans to serve, and the dashboard will help it plan how to focus efforts. During the site visit, the grant team indicated that it uses this dashboard routinely. Although the dashboard includes a number of indicators, the team reported that senior management tends to focus on only a few of them. If the team were to start over, it might have more thoroughly specified the potential analytic uses of the dashboard.

TWC has calculated that the duration of Army UCX claims has dropped from 24.6 (2011) to 15.8 (2015) weeks over the course of the initiative. The grant team reported that in 2011, UCX claims were approximately $65 million, dropping to approximately $35 million in 2015 despite having more service members; the UCX cost per service member has declined. Texas calculated that 2,380 Army UCX claimants had entered employment through December 2012; Texas still tracks this measure and plans to resume reporting it. The state also reported seeing an increase in transitioning service members registering in WIT before their separation date. The grant team views this outcome of the grant strategies as very positive, because it signals engagement with service members before separation.

The grant team is still trying to determine what to report to senior staff and externally. The economy has been a significant factor in the changing metrics, as has been the rush of early releases. The TVLP director indicated that veterans' employment is a complex problem with no magic solution. It takes great effort and requires changing the Army mindset and engaging service members before separation. It is important that separating soldiers use their days at TAP to move toward civilian employment.

d.   Customer records from WIT are balanced against wage records for the wage report and the entered employment report. A wage record check matches job seekers' records against wage records, but because it is not limited to UCX recipients, state staff perform this task manually. Because the check currently involves only a small number of records, Texas believes it is not worth automating. If the Army UCX Initiative expanded to all branches, the number of checks would increase from about 4,000 to 15,000, perhaps making automating the process worthwhile to gain efficiency for WIT, but not necessarily for the TVLP database.

e.   State law several years ago required information technology services to be provided through the Department of Information Resources; such services currently are contracted out through IBM, which oversees the mainframe computers. The UI database is in DB2 format. The UI system and WIT are linked and exchange information. All claimant information is stored in WIT. UI claimants have always been identified in WIT, but the team reported that as a result of this initiative, it now identifies the UCX claimant subgroup.

f.   When a claimant files for UCX (as with UI), his or her information is transferred to WIT. If the claimant does not register in WIT within seven days, the system creates a basic shell registration for the claimant. The online registration process for UCX (as with UI) transitions directly into WIT registration. For telephone registrations, prompts within the system forward claimants. Claimants also receive substantial amounts of correspondence directing them to register.

g.   Each agency working with veterans has its own performance measures. The grant director felt that this lack of uniformity contributes to a fractured system and recommends better integrating workforce and transition centers.

Objective 7:   Ensure compliance with DOL requirements

Texas collaborated with DOL and its contractors throughout the grant period.

C. Summary of grant experience

In addition to grant team reflections reported in the sections above, the Texas grant team reflected on the **sustainability**, **replicability**, and **scalability** of the activities undertaken under this grant. The grant team plans to sustain the email group, collaboration on job fairs, and staff on bases after the grant.

The team also reflected on the **lessons learned** from this grant. The grant director indicated that collaborations during the grant, for example with JCEP, ESGR, the National Guard, and the Army Reserves have worked well. The team has had a positive experience collaborating with Fort Bliss to integrate STSEI staff; it had a good relationship with the transition service manager who was initially there and is working toward developing a good relationship with the new one. In addition, the team indicated that most of its partners effectively fulfilled their responsibilities within budgets.

One of the grant team's frustrations has been integrating STSEI staff on site at Fort Hood. The team noted that the central Texas workforce board was not supportive in this because it had previously attempted this integration without success. At Fort Hood, there has been great cooperation on job fairs but it has taken longer to coordinate on Capstone and other day-to-day efforts. It was only during the site visit that office space was found for the STSEI staff member working on Fort Hood, for example. Another frustration has been the limited DoD involvement in the grant overall. Although several Army representatives participated in initial calls, involvement did not continue over the course of the grant.

Moving forward after the grant, TVLP would like to become more active on social media. TVLP recently hired a full-time social media person who functions in the communications department at TWC. TVLP would like to emulate TWC's success at social media and also collaborate on an organized social media strategy so that veterans can find everything they need from two or three websites. For example, the program reported that the Texas Wide Open for Business site had 13,000 hits between December 2014 and May 2015, but it would like to increase that traffic, as well as reduce the bureaucracy involved in producing updates, videos, and other outreach materials aimed at keeping separating service members in the state. The grant team reported that the TWC Commissioner's Texas Wide Open for Veterans initiative, the goal of which is to attract veterans to Texas and to retain separating service members in Texas, has generated interest from military transition centers that want to work with TWC. The website focuses on employment but also provides veterans with resources to research cost of living, schools, and other state resources. Texas Wide Open for Veterans was launched on December 5, 2015, at the Workforce Solutions Office in Killeen. Representatives from Fort Hood attended the launch. In its final grant report, Texas reported that UCX claimants are calling the TVLP hotline to inquire about this initiative.

Another goal identified during the site visit would be to work towards a military policy of allowing transitioning service members who have obtained civilian employment to separate early. This recommendations was based on observations that some service members are prevented from accepting firm job offers because required start dates are prior to their scheduled separations.

Because the economy in Texas has been improving over the course of the grant, the team does not feel it can take credit for increases in veterans' employment; targeted workforce services prepare people for jobs, but the jobs have to exist for employment to improve. Also, because Texas was already sharing data across programs prior to the grant, the state did not anticipate that grant activities would have a strong impact on veteran outcomes. The grant team was pleased that the nature of the grant was to be creative and report on that creativity using grantee-developed measures, rather than strategies and performance measures developed by DOL. The team reports that it is not typical to be given $750,000 to develop creative approaches and that initially this novel approach was challenging to explain to senior state leadership.

A lesson learned in first working on SkillsNet was to make sure that all staff collaborations are documented in accessible memoranda of understanding. The SkillsNet process felt too informal and it was difficult to trace the original plans and process after SkillsNet backed out.

In the grant team's view, **promising practices** that emerged from their grant include sharing data across veterans' programs, a practice that did not occur before the grant. The team has been able to target its outreach to different types of veterans, such as older and younger veterans.

The grant team has found the TVLP DD-214 database to be extraordinarily useful during the grant; although it was due to end several times already, funding has always come through to continue the database because the legislature understands the value of it. The grant team anticipates using the database as Employment Services staff take over more services to veterans under the refocusing guidelines. The team indicated that there should be greater access to DD-214 data for those serving veterans; even an expensive effort to expand access would yield great savings and improved services and analyses, given the inefficiencies of the current system.

The grant team also noted its development of the Texas Skills to Work resume translation application as a promising practice. They reflected that many states build their own translation applications so that they can take credit for the result. Going forward with each state adopting a different approach, there is a concern about lack of consistency and maintenance requirements. The grant team suggested that it would be willing to partner with other states and forego credit to develop a comprehensive, consistent translation application that all states can use. A translation application should be able not only to directly translate the veteran's experience into specific similar jobs, but also to give relevant options to veterans hoping to switch fields. The team suggested that the best approach would be for DOL and DoD to partner on a comprehensive skills translation tool.

The grant team believes that another promising approach will emerge with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) implementation; this is the ability to match groups of SSNs against the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS), as opposed to SSNs of only those who have received services. Texas is adding into its WIOA state plan language about tracking

veteran outcomes that will enable the state to conduct WRIS SSN matching on a larger scale. A potential application would be assisting Fort Hood in analyzing the outcomes of everyone who goes through its transition center. The Fort Hood transition team noted how useful this analysis would be in identifying the outcomes related to each program that transitioning soldiers participate in, and information for soldiers who separate in other states but draw UCX in Texas. The Fort Hood team would like to be able to track mobility of the soldiers it serves.

The Fort Hood transition team reflected that the on-base collaboration that has occurred during the grant has been effective in part because of the strength of the on-site STSEI staff. This strength also helps with the warm handover. The grant team concurred; the Fort Bliss STSEI staff person indicated that prior to the recent change in policy, his short briefings during TAP were helping him connect veterans to services. The Fort Bliss STSEI indicated that he would like to participate more in warm handovers, and would continue on-base after the grant ends.

UCX Dashboard from Q2 2015

	Q4-13			Q1-14			Q2-14			Q3-14			Q4-14			Q1-15			Q2-15			Initiative
UCX DASHBOARD	2013	2013	2013	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015	Totals
Monthly	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	
New UCX in WIT	618	539	520	564	486	499	479	350	287	505	470	533	513	493	480		413	511	420	407	391	23,662
Outreached	425	1,200	305	1,060	402	479	609	441	1,380	638	1,233	475	864	925	826	1,209	767	1,083	932	1,432	1,571	24,560
New TSP in WIT	344	296	288	483	353	462	398	367	414	413	408	356	377	275	268		357	414	431	342	369	9,678
STSEI Staff Events (including Capstone)	9	13	6	12	10	12	15	11	12	11	12	11	12	15	8	11	8	11	13	52	88	364
Military Exiters (estimated)	1,470	1,425	1,230	1,350	1,475	1,383	1,347	950	1,175	1,358	1,163	1,135	1,075	950	900	925	950	850	875	915	900	28,186
# Ent Emp/wage recs (UCX Grant EE Target = 2480)			3,972			5,201			6,313			7,534			8,931			10,185				
UCX Army Duration & Payout	Oct12-Sep13						Apr13-Mar14						Oct13-Sep14						Apr14-Mar15			
Avg Weeks Claimed (#)	16.6						16.2						16.2						15.8			
Total Amount Paid ($) (2)	$48.5M						$41.1M						$37.98M						$35.65M			

Quick Tip Tool

I am a *veteran* who:

- served on active duty more than 180 days and received other than a dishonorable discharge

- was discharged/released from active duty because of a service connected disability, or

- was a member of a Reserve/National Guard component called to active duty, served during a period of war, or in a campaign, or expedition for which a campaign badge is authorized, or released from active duty by reason of sole survivorship discharge.

I am a *spouse* of:

- a veteran who died of a service connected disability

- a veteran who has a total disability rating resulting from a service connected disability

- a veteran who died while a service connected disability was in existence, or

- an active duty service member who for more than 90 days is/was listed as:
    - missing in action
    - captured in the line of duty by hostile forces, or
    - was forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power.

IF ANY OF THESE APPLY TO YOU, PLEASE REVIEW THE BACK OF THIS CARD.

Front

In order to serve you better, please indicate whether any of these apply to you.

It is not necessary to inform the staff which of these factors may apply to you—only inform them that one or more of the factors do apply.

One or more of the following apply to me:

➢ Recently separated from active duty within the last 3 years between 18 and 24 years of age

➢ Recently separated from active duty within the last 3 years and have been unemployed 6 or more consecutive months in the last 12 months

➢ Do not have a high school diploma or GED

➢ Low income *(This determination is based on where you live and the size of your family. If you aren't sure, contact the front desk or a staff member.)*

➢ Homeless or at risk of being homeless

➢ Ex-offender released within the last 12 months

➢ Disabled or special disabled (entitled to compensation from VA) *The request for this information is strictly voluntary and will be kept confidential. The purpose for this information is strictly to provide priority of service to individuals with disabilities. Refusal to provide the information will not subject anyone to adverse treatment. The information will be used only in accordance with law.*

➢ Transitioning member of the Armed Forces who has participated in the Transition Assistance Program and is in need of intensive services

➢ Member of the Armed Forces who is wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facility or warrior transition unit

➢ Spouse or other family caregiver of such wounded, ill or injured members

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