



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

VETERANS

**USDA Opportunities for
Transitioning Service Members,
Veterans and Military Spouses**



ELMO

(Enough Let's Move On)

Bill
ASHTON

U.S. Navy
Retired



Monshi
RAMDASS

U.S. Army
Retired

USDA supports America's heroes and provides opportunities and resources to Veterans in the areas of the 3Es: Employment, Education, and Entrepreneurship.



DID YOU KNOW?



We serve those who have served us

Veterans don't know what Veterans don't know

Oath of an enlisted or officer has no expiration, we want to continue to serve our communities

Institute for Veterans and Military Families V-Start: State Report
<https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/research-analytics/veteran-data-insights/v-start/v-start-dashboards/#staterreportdash>

Veterans Crisis Line [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255), Veterans press 1

Know where your DD214 (Certificate of Release or discharge from Active Duty is located and a family member has a copy

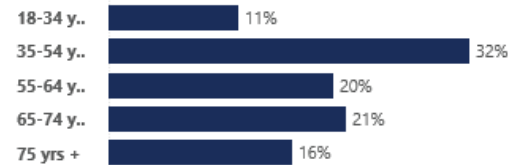
DEMOGRAPHICS



VETERAN POPULATION



VETERAN AGE DISTRIBUTION



VETERAN RACE DISTRIBUTION

White	73.6%
Hispanic or Latino	4.7%
Black or African American	20.8%
Asian	1.9%
Not Reported	1.0%
2+ Races	2.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.4%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Is..	0.1%

VETERAN UNEMPLOYMENT



VETERAN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY AGE



MILITARY SEPARATIONS [1]



LABOR



VETERAN MEDIAN INCOME & POVERTY



JOB CENTERS:

OUT OF THE 51 JOB CENTERS IN THE STATE
40 OFFER VETERAN REPRESENTATIVE SUPPORT

TOP 5 GROWING OCCUPATIONS IN THE STATE

(Based on projected change in total # of jobs 2012-2022)

OCCUPATION	RANK	# NEW JOBS	% CHANGE
Personal Care Aides	1	65%	28,370
Home Health Aides	2	51%	5,920
Physician Assistants	3	45%	1,100
Statisticians	4	44%	520
Nurse Practitioners	5	44%	2,050

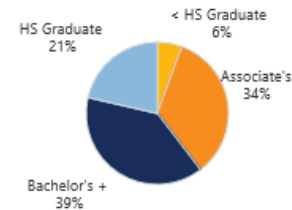
EDUCATION



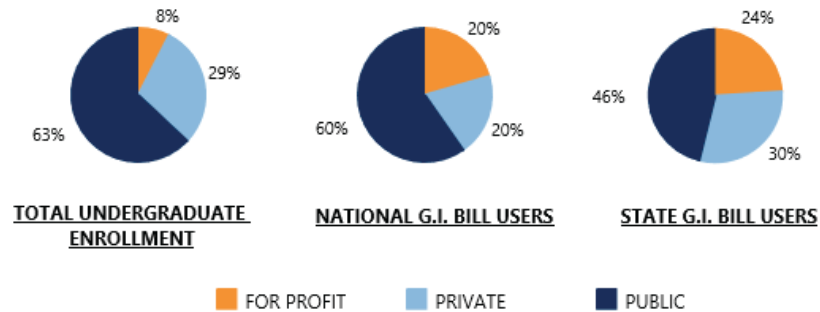
VETERAN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

53,328 GI BILL USERS

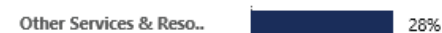
LEVEL OF EDUCATION BREAKDOWN



ENROLLMENT BREAKDOWN BY SCHOOL TYPE



RELEVANT RESOURCES AVAILABLE [4]



VA EXPENDITURE TREND BY RELEVANT CATEGORIES [5]



\$2,154,783M



WHY VETERANS?

There are approximately 18.2 million Veterans in the U.S.

- 19 percent of the military come from rural America
- 233,000 Vets (1.2 percent) reported being in an agriculture related occupation, industry, or field
- Approximately 5 million live in rural America
- Veterans want meaningful work and quality of life that can be achieved through farming, ranching, community leadership or owning a small business

USDA Needs Veterans so that, together, we can:

Preserve and strengthen rural communities

Restore and conserve the environment

Veterans have characteristics needed in agriculture, agribusiness and in rural business: Dependability; Integrity; Decision making; Leadership; Adaptability; Tenacity; Attention to detail; Discipline; Teamwork

DoD Skill Bridge Program

USDA Apprenticeships

- **Agricultural Commodity Graders**
- **Wildland Firefighters**
- **Food Inspectors**

Collaboration/Networking with

- Department of Labor (Apprenticeships)
- Department of Defense (DoD Skill Bridge Program)
- Department of Veterans Affairs (VBA and VHA)
- National Association of State Directors of Agriculture
- National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs
- National Association of State Workforce Agencies
- Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) – American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans
- Farmer Veterans Coalition
- Military Spouse Employment Program
- Soldier for Life



Carlina Williams, USN Veteran, started a mobile juice business, Communion Juice, which serves locally-sourced, cold-pressed fresh juice and herbal shots. She hopes to eventually franchise her business.

Veterans can learn to fight wildfires through the USDA Forest Service's apprenticeship



Rupert Richards, USAF Veteran, is the Agricultural Marketing Service Specialty Crops Inspection/Training Branch Chief, USDA Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Calvin Riggleman, USMC Veteran, took the products from his family farm and transformed them into a wide range of condiments



Angela Mulder, USAF Veteran, learns about agriculture and farming by volunteering with Vets on the Farm

VETERANS



EMPLOYMENT

EMPLOYMENT

USDA's Employment Opportunities for transitioning service members, military spouses (New Executive Order), and veterans:

- Match skills / qualifications to careers at USDA
- Review resumes; provide feedback
- Explain the Federal hiring process (USA JOBS, special hiring authorities, category rating)

Your military experience/can be directly translatable to jobs at USDA, such as:

- Criminal Justice
- Soil Conservationist Technician
- Contracting and Procurement
- Information Technology
- Food Inspection and Public Health
- Smoke Jumper
- Finance
- Economists

EMPLOYMENT

On-the-Job Training:

Paid Apprenticeships

- Agricultural Commodity Graders – 12-month training program through USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, starting at GS-5/7
- Wildland Firefighters – 3,000 hour on-the-job learning program through USDA's Forest Service, available positions include GS-3, 4/5, and 5
- Food Inspector and Consumer Safety Inspector
- Dairy Graziers* - Includes full-time employment, training and mentorship over a period of two years

DoD SkillBridge / Career Skills Program:

Eligible service members can participate in industry training instead of performing military duties during the closing months of their career

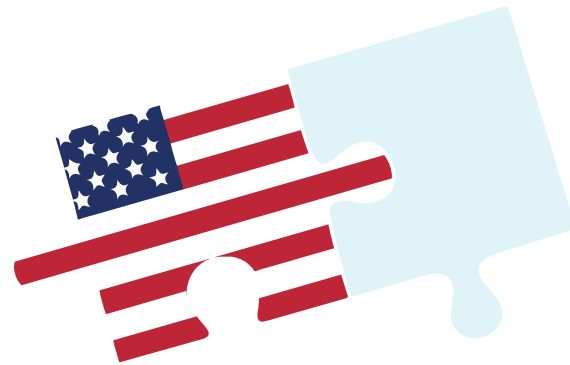
*Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship is an independent non-profit organization with a National Apprenticeship under the U.S. Department of Labor-Employment and Training Administration

Austin Looney uses drip torches to conduct backburns



Jobs at USDA

All USDA jobs already pre-filtered for
“open to public, Veterans and
Military Spouses.”



To apply, check out job
opportunities at

[USAJobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov)



EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

USDA's Veterans Employment Assistance: monshi.ramdass@osec.usda.gov

Department of Labor Apprenticeships:
<https://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship/index.htm>

Agricultural Commodity Grader Apprenticeship:
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/careers/apprenticeship-program>

Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship: <https://www.nafri.gov/wfap/>

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship: <https://www.dga-national.org/Participate>

DoD SkillsBridge: <https://dodskillbridge.com/>

Army Career Skills Program: <https://www.army.mil/standto/2017-07-13>

EO Enhancing Noncompetitive Civil
Service Appointments of Military Spouses:
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-enhancing-noncompetitive-civil-service-appointments-military-spouses/>
<https://www.veterans.gov/milspouses/>

VETERANS

**SPECIAL HIRING
AUTHORITIES**

EMPLOYMENT GOALS

25% of all new hires are vets (1 out of 4 new hire)

25% of workforce are vets (currently 13%)

10% of workforce are disabled veterans

Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA)

30% or more Disabled Veterans

Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA)

Schedule A – Individuals with Disabilities (Vets/Non-Vets)

**SPECIAL HIRING
AUTHORITIES**

Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA)

What it provides:

- Appointment of eligible Veterans up to GS-11 under excepted appointments normally in the competitive service. After completing two years of successful service, the Veteran must be noncompetitively converted to a career or career-conditional appointment.

When to use it:

- A good tool for filling entry-level to mid-level positions

Who is eligible:

- Disabled Veterans
- Veterans who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during a war declared by Congress, or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized
- Veterans who, while serving on active duty in the Armed Forces, participated in a military operation for which the Armed Forces Service Medal was awarded
- Veterans separated from active duty within the past 3 years

Benefits to hiring manager:

- Allows a manager to fill positions quickly by appointing eligible Veterans to positions for which they are qualified, without issuing a vacancy announcement
- No minimum service requirement, but Veteran must have served on active duty not active duty for training.

30 Percent or more Disabled Veterans

What it provides:

- Enables a hiring manager to appoint an eligible candidate to any position for which he/she is qualified, without competition, with no grade-level limitation. Initial appointments are time-limited, lasting more than 60 days; however, the Veteran can noncompetitively convert to a permanent status at any time during the time-limited appointment.

When to use it:

- A good tool for filling positions quickly at any grade level

Eligibility:

- Disabled Veterans who were retired from active military service with a service-connected disability rating of 30 percent or more
- Disabled Veterans rated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as having a compensable service-connected disability of 30 percent or more

Benefits to hiring manager:

- An effective way to quickly appoint eligible disabled Veterans to any position for which they are qualified without issuing a vacancy announcement.

Veterans' Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA)

What it provides:

Flexibility gives preference eligible and certain eligible Veterans access to jobs that otherwise only would have been available to status employees. Preference eligible and Veterans are not afforded preference, but they are allowed to compete for job opportunities that are not offered to other external candidates. A VEOA eligible who is selected will be given a career or career-conditional appointment.

When to use it:

Agencies may appoint VEO eligibles who have competed under agency merit promotion announcements when they are recruiting from outside their own workforce.

Who is eligible:

Preference eligible; and service personnel separated after 3 or more years of continuous active service performed under honorable conditions.

Benefits to hiring manager:

Allow managers to consider highly qualified non-status preference eligible and Veterans without using a more restricting examination.

Schedule “A” Appointment Authority

What it provides:

Employment for Veterans and people with disabilities.

When to use it:

May be used to appoint at any grade level and for any job (time-limited or permanent) for which an individual qualifies. Veterans’ Preference applies. After two years of satisfactory service, employee may be converted, without competition, to the competitive service.

Who is eligible:

Eligible veterans who have a severe physical, psychological or intellectual disability. Show proof of disability from licensed medical professional, vocational rehabilitation specialist or any Federal or State Agency, or agency of the District of Columbia or a U.S. territory that issues or provides disability benefits.

Benefits to hiring manager:

Allows managers to fill positions quickly by appointing eligible individuals to positions for which they are qualified without issuing a vacancy announcement.

VETERANS



EDUCATION

Ag experts are in high demand

Higher Education – A recent Purdue University research study indicates during the next five years, U.S. college graduates will find good employment opportunities if they have expertise in food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, or the environment. In the United States, between 2020 and 2025, the number of new college graduates annually seeking employment opportunities in food, agriculture, renewable natural resources and the environment will remain strong (approx. 59,400).

Plant science

Food science

Environmental science

Sustainable biomaterials

Water resources science and engineering

Precision agriculture

Veterinary medicine

Certificates – Many U.S institutions and organizations offer certificates in sustainable agriculture
Student Farms – Offer practical, hands-on education through courses, internships, special projects, and research projects

Student Farms – Offer practical, hands-on education through courses, internships, special projects, and research projects

EDUCATION

EDUCATION

Farm Training and Apprenticeships – Equip Veterans with the right tools and skills to gain experience and qualifications needed to participate in USDA programs

ATTRA's Armed to Farm program is for military Veterans and provides trainings from conference presentations to two-day workshops to week-long training events

Farmer Veteran Coalition provides direct assistance to Veterans in their beginning years of farming or ranching

Extension – USDA works with universities to provide non-formal education and learning activities directly to ag producers, small business owners, consumers and families throughout the country



Matt Smiley, left, (**Army/OIF**) explains blossom-end rot to Marquise Rhym, right, (**USMC/OEF/OIF**). Marquise was placed on R Kelley Farms outside Sacramento, CA, for a 4-month internship. Once his internship is over, Marquise will be hired full-time to help manage the farm.



Scholarships

The **USDA/1890 National Scholars Program** is a partnership between USDA and the 1890 historically black land-grant colleges and universities (PDF, 1.2 MB). The program provides full tuition, fees, books, room and board to students pursuing degrees in agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, or related academic disciplines. When the student has completed the academic and summer work requirements of the scholarship, USDA may at its discretion convert the student to a permanent employee without further competition.



<https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/careers/scholarship-programs>

EDUCATION RESOURCES

Purdue University Study:

<https://www.purdue.edu/usda/employment/>

Sustainable Agriculture Education and Training Directory (Degrees, Certificates, Student Farms):

<https://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/edtr/sustainable-agriculture-education-directory>

Farm Training and Apprenticeships:

<https://www.nal.usda.gov/veteran-programs-and-resources>

ATTRA Armed to Farm:

<https://www.ncat.org/armedtofarm/>

Farmer Veteran Coalition:

<https://www.farmvetco.org/about-us/our-programs/farming-fellowship/>

Extension:

<https://nifa.usda.gov/extension>

S.A.V.E. Farm – a pathway to farming

<https://www.thesavefarm.org/>

Battleground to Breaking Ground

<https://txagrability.tamu.edu/bgbg/>

Arcadia Farms

<http://arcadiafood.org/programs/veteran-farmer-program>

VETERANS



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship – From Farm to Fork

USDA can help agriculture entrepreneurs get access to capital and land, and help you manage your risk

Loans

- Microloans
- Operating Loans
- Farm Ownership Loans

Land

- Transition Incentives Program

Enhancing Land Quality

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Agricultural Easement Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program

Crop Insurance

Technical Assistance / Conservation Technical Assistance



Mannah Gbeh, pictured with his son, grew up in Liberia before coming to the U.S. and enlisting in the Navy, serving 3 deployments in support of OIF and OEF. Today, Mannah owns and operates Bee Valley Farm in Jamul, CA where he produces garlic, honey, olives and almonds.

Loans to include Farm Service Loans and Single Family Home Loans

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/index>

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-guaranteed-loan-program>

FY-18 – 82 Million in Direct Loans and 76 Million in Guaranteed Loans

FY-19 – 83 Million in Direct Loans and 66 Million in Guaranteed Loans

FY-20 – 119.5 Million in Direct Loans and 91.6 Million in Guaranteed Loans

Rural Development Home Loans, Refinancing current home loan and home repairs

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/RHS-DecisionMapInfographic.pdf>

FY-18 – 167.8 Million in Direct Loans and 157 Million in Guaranteed Loans

FY-19 – 123.4 Million in Direct Loans and 116 Million in Guaranteed Loans

FY-20 – 172.2 Million in Direct Loans and 23 Million in Guaranteed Loans

What is the Rural Development Broadband ReConnect Program?

<https://www.usda.gov/reconnect>

USDA Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program (DLT)

https://rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/508_RD_FS_RUS_DLTGrant.pdf

Entrepreneurship From Farm to Fork

Veterans who are part of the community of New and Beginning Farmers are eligible for USDA programs to help start – and continue – a career in farming



Access to ag resources, such as capital, land, business development, marketing, insurance, etc.

Find information tailored to you by using the New Farmer Discovery Tool

Connect with a mentor, attend workshops, and receive online resources through USDA's partnership with SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives)

Veterans represent 6% of the U.S. Population but account for 13.5% of U.S. Small Business (3.7 million)

- Employ 5.8 million Americans
- Pay wages in excess of \$210 Billion
- Generate 1.1 Trillion in receipts
- Produce \$1.7 Trillion in U.S. GDP

Josh Eilers, a former Army Ranger, now owns a cattle ranch in Texas and specializes in high-quality FullBlood Wagyu.

Entrepreneurship – Rural Business

Veterans can help strengthen and develop rural communities by starting or expanding a rural business. USDA can help with:

Loans and Loan Guarantees
Processing and Marketing of Products
Energy Efficiency Improvements

Want to start a Franchise?

VetFran member companies have grown into a large network of over 650 franchise brands that voluntarily offer financial discounts, mentorship, and training for aspiring veteran franchisees and veterans seeking employment.

Rural is closer than you think!
[View our USDA Eligibility Map](#)



Torrance Hart, a USAF Veteran, now runs a successful e-commerce business called Tweak & Twine

Entrepreneurship Resources

New Farmers: <https://newfarmers.usda.gov/veterans>

Discovery Tool: <https://newfarmers.usda.gov/discovery/>

USDA and SCORE: <https://www.score.org/usda>

Rural Development programs:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs>

Eligibility Map:

<https://eligibility.sc.egov.usda.gov/eligibility/welcomeAction.do>

U.S. Small Business Administration:

USDA Rural Small Business information to soon be included in Boots to Business course

(TAP): www.sba.gov/bootstobusiness

Get help with your business plan by visiting your local Veteran Business Outreach Center:

www.sba.gov/vboc

VetFran: <https://www.vetfran.com/>

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is a lack of access to enough food for a healthy lifestyle. In 2018, about 11 percent of US households were food insecure at least some time during the year. Food insecurity tends to be higher in households relying on social assistance, single-parent homes, ethnic minorities and people who are homeless or house insecure. The number of food insecure Veterans is also high among those who served in the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. These Veterans are almost twice as likely to be food insecure compared to the general population.

SNAP

To get SNAP benefits, you must apply in the state in which you currently live and you must meet certain requirements, including resource and income limits, which are described on this page. SNAP income and resource limits are updated annually.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility>

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-directory>

SNAP Toll-free 1-800-221-5689



VETERANS

THANK YOU

BILL ASHTON

Bill.Ashton@usda.gov

202-720-1751

Contact Us:

Veterans@osec.usda.gov

Visit Us:

USDA Service Centers:

<https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>

Learn More:

www.usda.gov/veterans



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE