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IWD Announces New Partnership to Help Iowa Employers Hire Transitioning Military Members

Agency will administer Defense Department's SkillBridge program, help companies get started.

DES MOINES, IOWA – Iowa Workforce Development today is [announcing a new partnership](#) that will make it easier than ever for Iowa employers to expand their workforces by hiring skilled military service members who have honorably served their country and are now seeking new opportunities as they leave the military.

IWD recently was approved to become a third-party administrator for the U.S. Defense Department's SkillBridge program – a nationwide initiative that allows transitioning service members to spend the last six months of their tours of duty serving in internships at a variety of private businesses. The new relationship will allow Iowa employers to bypass the usual Defense Department process and instead work directly with IWD to get the program started in their companies.

"Iowa employers are always looking for hardworking, mission-driven employees who know how to get a job done," said Governor Kim Reynolds. "Veterans are a perfect match for our state's work ethic and hardworking culture. SkillBridge is another tool we can use to recruit those service members to Iowa and show them firsthand the opportunities that come with living and working in a state where you have the freedom to flourish."

The U.S. Dept. of Defense estimates that roughly 200,000 members of the U.S. Armed Forces leave active military service every year from more than 140 military installations in the U.S. and abroad. SkillBridge was created to smooth the path toward helping those transitioning service members land fulfilling careers in civilian life.

Under the program, the Defense Department will pay a service member's salary and benefits for up to six months while that person receives on-the-job training at a private employer. Employers get to train and evaluate a potential employee at no cost and with no obligation. Training programs must meet Defense Department guidelines – required approval that, under the new relationship, now will come from Iowa Workforce Development.

Some employers across Iowa already are training Veterans via SkillBridge, with a total of 37 Iowa job opportunities for service members currently being advertised on [the program's national website](#). However, Iowa leaders believe the program could benefit many more companies than those who currently are involved.

"Our goal is to significantly expand SkillBridge in Iowa by making it easier than ever for Iowa companies to take part in it," said Beth Townsend, Executive Director of Iowa Workforce Development. "We want every Iowa employer to know about this program, how IWD can help them get started, and how they ultimately can find quality talent by hiring people who are leaving military service."

Joe Murphy, president of the Iowa Business Council, said the organization is "thrilled to have IWD be a third-party administrator of the SkillBridge program."

"Having a strategic workforce program like SkillBridge to attract and retain military service members is an incredible opportunity for our state," Murphy said. "As we all know, hiring a military person or Veteran provides invaluable advantages for companies of every size and will lead to further talent development opportunities for Iowa. We were proud to be an early partner with IWD in the SkillBridge project, and our members stand ready to expand our partnership as we collectively implement the program."

Outside of its administrative responsibilities, IWD also plans to take part in SkillBridge as an employer and will be working with other state agencies to assist in their hiring of transitioning service members. **Any private employer or service member who is interested in the SkillBridge program should start by emailing SkillBridge@iwd.iowa.gov.**

IWD staffers plan to discuss the program in detail at a **virtual Lunch & Learn from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 17.** [Click here to register.](#)

The new SkillBridge partnership is one of many ongoing efforts by IWD to ease the path for Veterans and transitioning service members and make it easier for them to find new careers in Iowa. The list includes:

- [Home Base Iowa](#), which works to attract Veterans and their families to Iowa by providing one-on-one career assistance and connecting transitioning service members to special incentives provided by more than 125 HBI communities.
- [IowaWorksforVeterans.gov](#), a new web portal launched last year to provide a smoother entry point for Veterans into the IowaWORKS job bank and a variety of career assistance available there.
- PsychArmor, a program that recently partnered with Home Base Iowa to launch a Business Training Program that helps employers understand military culture.

For more information, visit [IWD's SkillBridge Information page](#).

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