

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE

OFF-BASE TRANSITION TRAINING PILOT

ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS



VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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Executive Summary

“I am so pleased to have met you yesterday at the Off-Base Transition Training I wanted to let you know what an impactful day it was for me. I have 25+ years of experience in the teaching field and desire to complete the final years before my retirement serving the people of this state. To do so means that I will search for a position...something that I haven't done for 20 years!”
- Raleigh/Fayetteville Participant

The Off-Base Transition Training (OBTT) pilot program began its first year of operation on January 11, 2022, in accordance with section 4303 of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-315). Section 4303 directed the Department of Labor (DOL) to provide the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to veterans and spouses of veterans at locations other than active military installations for a period of five years to improve employment-related outcomes in areas with high veteran unemployment. The OBTT pilot launched in five states (California, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas), and then expanded within those states to additional metropolitan areas based on veteran population densities. The curriculum was tailored specifically for veterans based on current topics related to employment covered in the Department of Labor’s (DOL’s) Transition Assistance Program (TAP) curriculum. Implementing these two-hour modularized versions of topics taught in DOL’s TAP curriculum over a three-day period, both in-person and virtually, allowed veterans and the spouses of veterans to select the topics they needed to support their employment goals. The option of virtual instructor-led modules helped meet the needs of participants who were unable to attend in person. This also increased the reach of the OBTT pilot to participants outside of the selected metropolitan areas. Marketing and communication efforts through local veteran community stakeholders provided the opportunity to engage with a dispersed veteran population.

Based on attendance records, the Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS) has concluded that OBTT is most attractive to veterans who have been separated from service longer than eight years. The lessons learned from their TAP experience may be outdated, or they may have separated from service prior to TAP being a mandatory part of their transition. As challenges arose during this first year of the pilot, VETS met those challenges and adapted the pilot to the needs of this population. OBTT will continue to be an excellent resource for veterans who are struggling with unemployment and underemployment.

Introduction

VETS serves as an integrated employment, training, and compliance enterprise within DOL. VETS administers programs designed to address the employment, training, and job security needs of approximately 200,000 military service members who transition to civilian life each year,¹ 8.8 million military veterans in the U.S. civilian labor force,² over 770,000 National Guard and Reserve members,³ and nearly 950,000 military spouses (594,110 Active Duty and 354,255 Guard and Reserve spouses).⁴

VETS' mission is to prepare America's veterans, service members and military spouses for meaningful careers, provide them with employment related resources and expertise, protect their employment rights, and promote their employment opportunities.

VETS' vision is to enable all veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses to reach their full potential in the workplace. VETS works to achieve this vision through three agency priorities:

1. Getting the military-to-civilian employment transition right;
2. Leveraging partnerships to maximize employment outcomes; and
3. Promoting and advancing equity, inclusion, and accessibility for underserved communities.

On January 11, 2022, the Department announced the launch of a five-year Off-Base Transition Training pilot program, in accordance with section 4303 of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 ([Public Law \(P.L.\) 116-315](#)), enacted on January 5, 2021. Section 4303 directed the Secretary of Labor to provide the Transition Assistance Program to veterans or the spouses of veterans at locations other than active military installations for a period of five years to improve employment-related outcomes in areas with high veteran unemployment.

TAP is a cooperative effort between the Department of Defense, DOL, Department of Education, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Homeland Security, Small Business Administration, and Office of Personnel Management. DOL's portion of TAP includes information, tools, and training aimed to help transitioning service members and their spouses establish a positive employment trajectory following their military career. VETS provides the Employment Fundamentals of Career Transition (EFCT), a one-day employment preparation workshop that is mandatory for transitioning service members. Additionally, VETS offers a two-day workshop for general employment preparation, Department of Labor Employment Workshop (DOLEW), and a two-day workshop for career exploration and technical career preparation, Career and Credential Exploration (C2E). DOL's two-day workshops comprise two of the four elective courses for transitioning service members.

¹ Source: Department of Defense (DoD), Improvements to the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Congressional Report, August 2022.

² Civilian noninstitutional population aged 18 years and over. Source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\) – 2022](#) (<https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat48.htm>).

³ [Department of Defense \(DOD\), Defense Manpower Data Center, Military Personnel Report, Selected Reserve Personnel by Reserve Component and Rank/Grade \(Updated Monthly\), September 2022](#), (<https://dwp.dmdc.osd.mil/dwp/app/dod-data-reports/workforce-reports>).

⁴ Military OneSource – [Demographics Profile](#), 2021, (<https://demographics.militaryonesource.mil/>)

The OBTT pilot launched in eight metropolitan areas across five states, offering four two-hour, in-person instructor-led employment skills and workforce development workshops. In addition, VETS launched ten two-hour virtual instructor-led workshops. The in-person workshops were expanded to include the option of ten workshops beginning November 2022.

An Employment Resource Coordinator (ERC) was placed in each metropolitan area to coordinate and schedule classroom training with partner organizations, and one ERC was added in November 2022 to manage the virtual instructor-led workshops. In 2022, 2,116 veterans or spouses of veterans were provided support through 1,947 virtual and in-person workshops through OBTT. Section 4303 directs the Secretary of Labor to submit a report to Congress in the year following each year that training was conducted under the pilot. This report marks the first in this series, as the pilot launched in January 2022.

Section 4303 of P.L. 116-315

Section 4303 of P.L. 116-315 amended section 301 of the Dignified Burial and Other Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2012 (Dignified Burial Act), P.L. 112-260. The statute tasked the Secretary of Labor with providing TAP to veterans or the spouses of veterans at no fewer than 50 locations other than military installations in states (as defined in section 101 of Title 38, U.S.C.) over the course of five years. Of those selected locations, at least 20 are to be in different states, with high rates of unemployment among veterans, and the Secretary is to provide services to meet the employment needs of eligible individuals. No additional funding was appropriated to carry out this section.

When selecting site locations, the Secretary gave preference to any state with a high rate of usage of unemployment benefits for recently separated members of the Armed Forces, or a labor force or economy that has been significantly impacted by a covered public health emergency. For this pilot, the term 'covered public health emergency' means the public health emergency declared by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under section 319 of the Public Health Services Act (42 U.S.C. 247d) on January 31, 2020, with respect to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), or a domestic emergency declared, based on an outbreak of COVID-19, by the President, the Secretary of Homeland Security, or a state or local authority.

As is noted above, the Secretary of Labor also is tasked with submitting a report to Congress in the year following each year that training is provided under the pilot. Each report is to include information about the employment outcomes of the eligible individuals who received training during the year covered by the report.

Lessons Learned from 2013-2015 OBTT Pilot

Section 4304 reauthorized the OBTT pilot that was enacted by the Dignified Burial Act. The initial OBTT pilot was launched in 2013 and concluded in 2015. The Dignified Burial Act required DOL to provide TAP programming to veterans and their spouses at locations other than military installations, and required the workshops to be piloted for two years starting in January 2013 in three to five states (at least two of which had to have high levels of veteran unemployment); at a sufficient number of locations to meet the needs of veterans and spouses within each pilot state; and anywhere except on military installations (although locations could include National Guard or reserve facilities not on active duty military installations). Section 4304 significantly expanded the scope and duration of the original OBTT pilot.

DOL received no additional funding for the initial two-year pilot. Time and resource constraints greatly influenced the Department's implementation of the pilot. DOL provided the same three-day employment workshop that it provided as part of TAP. These OBTT workshops provided employment training elements that were relevant to veterans, such as information on the federal hiring process, resume writing, and job searching practices. DOL provided the workshops from November 2013 through December 2014 to veterans in the three states that volunteered to host the pilot, Georgia, Washington, and West Virginia. In general, each state, through its state workforce agency, coordinated its workshops and locations differently. Georgia chose locations for the workshops based on the veteran state population data obtained from VA's website. The state of Washington chose several locations near military installations, and West Virginia held workshops mainly at National Guard installations and community college campuses. Each state developed its own marketing strategy and worked with their respective networks to assist in promoting the OBTT pilot. A total of 250 veterans participated in the 21 workshops held across the three states. Some of the lessons learned from this pilot included the following:

- Working groups should be diverse and include members of the National Guard, local workforce development boards, community colleges, and local veterans service organizations.
- The three-day workshop format excluded some veterans who were unable to commit to attending three days of back-to-back training and resulted in a number of participants leaving at some point during the workshop.
- Establishing a working committee within a state can increase attendance rates and increase community involvement.

When section 4303 of P.L. 116-315 was enacted and planning for the 2022 OBTT pilot began, VETS referred to the challenges and lessons learned from the previous OBTT pilot as a starting point. This report includes information regarding how VETS worked to incorporate these lessons learned in implementing and improving the new five-year pilot program.

Pilot Preparation, State Selection, and Launch

During Calendar Year (CY) 2021, VETS conducted deliberate planning for pilot implementation. The agency assigned a temporary federal project lead and identified the initial five pilot states: California, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas. At the time, pilot state selection was based on the most recently available BLS employment data, with the determining factors being the five states with the highest rates of veteran unemployment as well as usage of Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service Member (UCX) benefits. VETS made appropriate modifications to the existing TAP Services contract to support the pilot, and the vendor began development of the modular pilot curriculum.

After consideration of the statutory requirements, several locations in five states were chosen to participate in the pilot to provide a diverse geographic representation and facilitate an understanding of the various challenges faced by veterans. Locations within the pilot states were recommended by VETS’ State Directors (DVETS). VETS’ National Office reviewed the recommendations and focused on selecting locations in counties with high veteran unemployment rates, that contain large populations of veterans, and that are able to meet the requirements for workshop facilities, which include compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations related to COVID-19, and having suitable space and facilities to accommodate a minimum of 10 and maximum of 50 participants.

Initially, eight locations were chosen for the January 2022 launch and seven more were added during CY 2022, for a total of fifteen locations. Virtual instructor-led workshops were added during the first year and provided an option for those veterans unable to attend an in-person workshop. A list of locations and their start dates are shown below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Locations by Start Date

State-Location	Start Date
CA-Los Angeles	18-Jan-22
CA-San Diego	18-Jan-22
MA-Boston	18-Jan-22
NC-Raleigh / Fayetteville	18-Jan-22
TX-Dallas / Fort Worth	18-Jan-22
TX-Houston	18-Jan-22
TX-San Antonio	18-Jan-22
PA-Pittsburgh	25-Jan-22
PA-Philadelphia	10-Mar-22
CA-Los Angeles Orange/Riverside	2-Nov-22
NC-Charlotte	2-Nov-22
CA-Sacramento	3-Nov-22
NC-Winston-Salem	3-Nov-22
TX-El Paso	3-Nov-22
TX-Austin	1-Dec-22

Curriculum Development and Delivery

“So, I used what I learned in the class about the summary, relevant work experience, everything and applied to numerous bartending jobs. The response has been UNBELIEVABLE!!!... I’m happy to say, that new resume with the stylings I learned in the class have gotten me hired on the spot at two hotels.”
- Dallas Participant

OBTT is an extension of, and generally follows the content of, the existing Transition Assistance Program, and consists of ten two-hour, no cost, instructor-led, in-person and virtual workshops designed to assist participants in the pursuit of their employment goals.

Prior to developing course content, VETS conducted an analysis to determine appropriate topics and preferred delivery method. The analysis included reviews of 2013 OBTT pilot reports and the Government Accountability Office’s July 2015 Report on the initial pilot,⁵ listening sessions with three state offices (Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Texas), and a review of Labor Market Information (LMI) trends. Results from the 2015 OBTT pilot demonstrated that a delivery of the current TAP one-day Employment Fundamentals of Career Transition or two-day Employment Workshop were not suitable for this audience due to limited availability to attend workshops for an entire day.

The suite of courses was adapted from the multi-day model and converted to multiple two-hour modular workshops to address the time commitment problems reported during the original OBTT pilot. The modular development closely followed the model of the Transition Employment Assistance for Military Spouses (TEAMS) curriculum offered to military spouses and caregivers, who face many of the same barriers to employment. Based on evaluations from the 2015 pilot, the most beneficial topics for attendees were resume writing (56%), building interview skills (32%), and translating military experience to civilian job skills. Listening sessions provided further insights into local needs, including requests for a course on the topic of Federal hiring.

To meet the requirements of section 4303, workshops were designed primarily for in-person delivery. However, VETS determined that a virtual option would also be beneficial based on lessons learned through the TEAMS workshops. Additionally, maintaining a virtual option also allowed for flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic, as state and local policies regarding in-person activities could impact the availability of in-person workshops. As the pilot continues, VETS will continuously monitor attendance rates, feedback, and recommendations for improvement of its workshops to improve course materials and workshop delivery methods.

Facilitation of the course material is provided by using existing DOL contract instructors, hereafter referred to as “facilitators”. TAP facilitators provide a similar curriculum as a part of the one-day EFCT and the two-day DOLEW provided on military installations to transitioning service members. Using the existing network of trained facilitators that support the TAP program provides flexibility for the fulfillment of OBTT workshops nationwide. The facilitator focuses on the participants and their needs, while the ERC coordinates any administrative or logistical issues that arise during the presentation of the course material.

⁵ [GAO-15-518, Veterans' Employment: Need for Further Workshops Should Be Considered before Making Decisions on Their Future.](#)

National Guard/Reserve Component Consideration:

Section 4303 of P.L. 116-315 provides that veterans or the spouse of a veteran are eligible to receive services through OBTT at locations other than active-duty military installations. During pilot planning, VETS chose to target veterans, as defined under Title 38 U.S.C., currently serving in the National Guard and Reserves for OBTT services. This decision also was made because many members of the National Guard and Reserves are not eligible for TAP services. The previous OBTT pilot showcased the benefits in partnering with members of the National Guard and Reserve for planning and executing OBTT workshops. As a general matter, VETS has observed that OBTT attendees who have been separated from active duty for a longer period of time may be less likely to have participated in TAP during their separation and may require additional employment support. In addition, several National Guard and Reserve units have identified employment support as helpful for the retention of local Reservists and National Guardsmen, which has led VETS to hold OBTT events in support of National Guard units. For all of these reasons, VETS has concluded that the appropriate eligible population for OBTT is veterans, veterans currently serving in the National Guard and Reserves, and their spouses.

Staffing and Operations

“The instructor...was very knowledgeable, kept the workshop going at a good pace, answered all questions, and was very approachable. Great crash course in the Federal Hiring process and overview of USAJOBS. Learned which VA letter to use, which is an important part of the process. Covered the terminology used in federal employment, for instance, occupation series, agencies, hiring paths, etc. Covered where to find events, both virtually and in person. Touched on building a resume in USAJOBS. Provided a guide along with additional website resources. Overall, a great experience for transitioning Service Members looking for Federal employment.”
- Virtual Participant

At the end of CY22, 16 ERCs were employed in the 15 OBTT locations. OBTT workshops are supported by 42 OBTT-trained contract facilitators who also facilitate DOL’s TAP workshops. A contract OBTT project lead also was assigned through the existing TAP contract. Additionally, VETS field office staff in the pilot states were assigned to assist with the execution of the pilot. In addition, staff and resources were leveraged through the Department’s Employment and Training Administration and State Workforce Agencies (SWA) to provide guidance and employment services to eligible participants.

OBTT Project Lead: The OBTT Project Lead is responsible for implementing the pilot, as directed by VETS. The Project Lead manages the daily activities of the ERCs, and coordinates with the facilitators to plan and execute the OBTT workshops.

ERC: The ERCs, who are contracted personnel, are responsible for building relationships within their location and acting as the local point of contact for all OBTT-related activities and conversations. The ERC attends outreach engagements and special events in support of OBTT. The ERC also coordinates the logistic requirements for OBTT workshops.

Facilitators: Contract facilitators are responsible for delivering DOL’s OBTT curriculum at pilot locations, as scheduled by the ERCs.

VETS' Field Staff: VETS' DVETS and Assistant Directors (ADVETS) work with the ERCs and key stakeholders within their state to assist with outreach and engagement activities, as well as to provide guidance to ERCs regarding site locations and potential stakeholders.

Marketing Team: The marketing team, contracted by VETS, is responsible for developing branding and outreach materials, establishing appropriate marketing channels, and executing OBTT-related marketing campaigns for both targeted and national level engagement.

State Workforce Agencies: SWAs are encouraged to participate in marketing and hosting OBTT workshops to support their veteran community.

Marketing and Engagement

A key lesson learned from the 2013-15 OBTT pilot was that the success of the pilot was dependent upon VETS' ability to properly conduct marketing and outreach. VETS incorporated that lesson into its planning for the new 5-year pilot and leveraged a national and local level marketing strategy to reach eligible participants in the pilot localities. At the National level, VETS leveraged not only a marketing contract to support messaging and marketing campaigns, but also established national level partner organizations who could assist us with targeted outreach. VETS also determined that local outreach and engagement were necessary to take national level engagements and redirect that synergy for implementation at the local level. Accordingly, VETS utilized its state personnel, local state workforce agencies, DOL agency staff, grantees, military installations, and members of the Veterans Service Organization (VSO) and Military Service Organization (MSO) community to assist in marketing OBTT.

National Level

In January 2022, VETS modified an existing contract to add integrated marketing support for OBTT. Through this contract, VETS developed and deployed an integrated Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned (PESO) marketing campaign to increase visibility and awareness of OBTT among veterans, including those in the National Guard and Reserve, and the spouses of veterans. The marketing efforts included audience and persona mapping; OBTT logo and brand identity development; implementation of paid digital and social media campaigns; and the development of radio public service announcements (PSAs), video highlights, customizable marketing materials, state-specific resources, marketing toolkits, and more. The marketing campaigns resulted in nearly 25 million audience impressions, over 250,000 website visits, and a 2,690 percent increase in OBTT webpage traffic compared to pre-campaign traffic. The contract supporting this marketing activity terminated in September 2022 and a new contract was awarded in November 2022. The new contract staffing is currently underway and OBTT marketing support will resume in the near future.

In support of the OBTT pilot, and for the first time in its history, VETS utilized paid digital advertising as a method for promoting services to the veteran community. VETS developed a Google Ads campaign, along with multi-platform paid social media campaigns on LinkedIn and Facebook, which resulted in increased demand for and attendance at OBTT workshops. Additionally, online paid advertising allowed VETS to target specific options and set parameters for the ads, increasing reach to target audiences relevant to the assigned localities. These campaigns resulted in over 17 million impressions and 235,000 website clicks. The Google Ads

campaign and the multi-platform campaigns ended with the contract termination in September 2022. VETS continues to release regular social media posts promoting OBTT through its own social media platforms.

Additionally, VETS developed three PSAs (for 15, 30, and 60 seconds) that routinely aired in the OBTT pilot states and will continue to air through April 2023. The OBTT PSAs consistently place in the top 5-10 percent during station air periods, as measured by Nielsen ratings. Additionally, VETS produced a roughly one-minute animated video highlighting the benefit of attending an OBTT workshop(s). The PSAs have garnered over 1 million impressions and over 1,600 station airings.

Local Level

Local level efforts rely heavily on the work ERCs conduct within the community to communicate about the OBTT pilot and the benefits of attending the workshops being offered. Engagement activities are also dependent on stakeholders, LinkedIn posts, and flyers created by host sites and veteran organizations using the stakeholder toolkit. Additional local efforts included outreach events such as resource and job fairs, stand down events, and both virtual and in-person presentations to local organizations and groups. For example, the San Diego ERC created and delivered opportunities for VETS to author articles for local publications; in addition, the Sacramento ERC arranged for the local ADVET to be interviewed on a Sacramento metropolitan area radio show.

ERCs are successfully growing OBTT through relationship-building with state and local veteran support networks; identifying and engaging stakeholders to host and locally market the workshops to their veteran community; and coordinating with and engaging on opportunities to effectively reach the veteran population, such as by coordinating workshop delivery with apprenticeship graduations, individuals coming up for parole, Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) grantee participation requirements, and job fairs. The ERC coordinates the execution of the workshops to insure the functional and logistical requirements for the delivery of a quality program are in place.

The availability of OBTT to veterans, veterans currently serving in the National Guard and Reserves, and their spouses has been publicized to key stakeholders in the pilot locations and across the pilot states, such as the state's National Guard Adjutant General, state workforce development agencies, and VSO/MSO organizations.

OBTT Throughout the First Year

“ALL of the DOL-OBTT workshops that I have attended (I’ve attended almost all of them) have been EXCELLENT. Of all the various workshops that I have attended provided by various resources, the DOL-OBTT have been the BEST and the most valuable with information that I have been able to implement right away. The participant guides are great and very helpful resources especially to refer back to so you can focus more on the facilitator instead of taking numerous notes. This way you only take notes that stand out.”

– San Diego Participant

As is detailed below, each quarter of the first year of the OBTT pilot saw significant operational changes. The outreach, coordination, and engagement operations were similar in all states. Each ERC executed the program strategy while making tactical adjustments to fit their local situation.

In the first quarter of 2022, VETS initiated the OBTT pilot at nine locations, across five states. See Figure 1. VETS conducted 355 in-person workshops across these nine locations, and 48 virtual, instructor-led workshops with a total of 347 participants (278 in-person and 69 virtual attendees). VETS federal staff in the state and ERCs engaged with state agencies, Adjutant Generals, and American Job Centers (AJCs) in the local area to assist with promoting the pilot. VETS used DOL’s media channels for national marketing efforts and began developing targeted and paid marketing campaigns. In-person workshops were scheduled based on local stakeholder interest and space availability. VETS implemented a virtual schedule designed to ensure the workshops were held at times that were estimated to be the most accessible for potential participants.

During the second quarter of 2022, VETS maintained the pilot at the nine locations. VETS conducted 440 in-person workshops, 60 virtual workshops, and 11 special event in-person workshops with a total of 474 (388 in-person and 86 virtual) attendees. Radio PSAs began airing in April; Google Ads and targeted social media marketing campaigns began in June. ERCs continued local outreach activities and expanded their outreach to include colleges, universities, local non-profits, HVRP grantees, and apprenticeship programs. The Boston Veterans Association hosted the first targeted event that resulted in a quarter over quarter increase in participants from 12 to 38 in the Boston location. The Houston location saw a notable quarter over quarter increase of 98 in-person participants, due to a highly successful special event workshop. Virtual workshop attendance increased 24.6 percent.

Overall, the third quarter of 2022 saw a 60.8 percent increase over second quarter participation. VETS conducted 410 in-person workshops, 60 virtual workshops and held 27 special events resulting in 762 participants (475 in-person and 287 virtual). Raleigh, NC attendance increased 154.7 percent and virtual workshop attendance increased 233.7 percent as compared to the previous quarter. VETS believes these increases are attributable to the targeted Google and Social Media campaigns, as well as Radio PSAs that began running in the second quarter. Outreach to VA resulted in a blog post distributed to all veterans on their mailing list. VETS provided OBTT branded marketing products (signage, tablecloths, and flyers) to all ERC locations. The ERC in Pittsburgh, PA, was not available during this quarter, which negatively impacted in-person workshop scheduling and outreach; therefore, Pittsburgh had no participants in the third quarter. VETS began the coordination and onboarding of new ERCs to support expanding OBTT to six additional locations within the five states and to provide a dedicated

ERC for virtual workshops. In addition, VETS reached out to VA to coordinate adding VA Benefits information as an OBTT workshop. Discussions regarding this new workshop are ongoing.

The final quarter of 2022 saw a 10.4 percent decline overall in the number of OBTT workshop participants, as compared to third quarter participation. VETS conducted 450 in-person workshops, 50 virtual workshops, and 36 special event workshops with a total of 683 participants (560 in-person and 123 virtual). Virtual workshop participation declined by 57 percent. VETS believes this decline in attendance is attributable to the conclusion of the Google and Social Media ad campaigns in the third quarter, as well as the holiday season. The addition of six locations across the five states resulted in an 18 percent quarter over quarter increase of in-person attendees. Radio PSAs continued to air through the end of 2022. VETS announced its new contract for media and marketing in November 2022. VETS expects media and marketing efforts to resume in the spring of 2023.

Pilot Assessment

In its first year of operation, the OBTT pilot provided instruction, across the 15 pilot locations and virtually, to more than 2,200 participants. VETS explored different venues and marketing methods during this first year and is evaluating the effectiveness of each. The first year provided new information about how to connect with the local veteran population utilizing both traditional and more modern online methods.

VETS is evaluating pilot activities to determine which practices are dependent upon locality-specific situations and which can be universally applied across all OBTT locations. During the first year of operation, VETS adapted and adjusted local engagement tactics as the conditions of each location became more well known. For example, offering OBTT in-person workshops at special events and other opportunities where many services are offered by a number of different organizations has proven more effective at reaching larger numbers of veterans than standalone in-person workshops. VETS believes veterans may be more willing or able to attend such in-person events because there are multiple supportive services available to them. However, many participants have indicated they prefer to attend OBTT workshops virtually on a later date, rather than attending the workshops in-person during these special events. See Figure 2 for total CY 2022 participation. The locations highlighted in yellow are locations where participation in special events were available and used.

Figure 2: OBTT Participants by Location

ERC Territory	Active Date	CY22 Q1	CY22 Q2	CY22 Q3	CY22 Q4	CY22 Total
CA- Los Angeles/San Bernardino	18-Jan-22	94	75	61	20	250
CA- Riverside/Orange County	2-Nov-22	0	0	0	7	7
CA- Sacramento	3-Nov-22	0	0	0	26	26
CA- San Diego	18-Jan-22	5	12	24	8	49
MA- Boston	18-Jan-22	12	38	61	64	175
NC- Charlotte	2-Nov-22	0	0	0	55	55
NC- Raleigh/ Fayetteville	18-Jan-22	50	64	163	92	369
NC- Winston-Salem	3-Nov-22	0	0	0	18	18
PA- Philadelphia	10-Mar-22	21	36	33	30	120
PA- Pittsburgh	25-Jan-22	35	11	0	4	50
TX- Austin	1-Dec-22	0	0	0	18	18
TX- Dallas/Fort Worth	18-Jan-22	35	36	34	110	215
TX- El Paso	3-Nov-22	0	0	0	35	35
TX- Houston	18-Jan-22	2	100	60	34	196
TX- San Antonio	18-Jan-22	24	16	39	39	118
Virtual		69	86	287	123	565
Participant Totals		347	474	762	683	2266

Note: Territories in yellow include special events
 * Pittsburgh suspended services June, July and August.

Participant demographic data provides useful background information about who is seeking OBTT services. OBTT participants were mostly veterans, with 79% self-identifying as a veteran, 7% identifying as a spouse of a veteran, and 14% as an additional attendee or someone who did not self-identify. Additional attendees reported by ERCs generally include other family members, caregivers, or members of the veteran services community who want a first-hand understanding of the instruction so they can refer veterans to the instruction that best fits their needs. See Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Participants by Type

Type	CY22 Q1		CY22 Q2		CY22 Q3		CY22 Q4		CY22 Totals	
	Totals	%	Totals	%	Totals	%	Totals	%	Totals	%
Attendee Veteran	264	76%	339	72%	640	84%	553	81%	1796	79%
Attendee Other/Not Identified	70	20%	103	22%	68	9%	79	12%	320	14%
Attendee Veteran Spouse	13	4%	32	7%	54	7%	51	7%	150	7%
Grand Totals	347	100%	474	100%	762	100%	683	100%	2266	100%

Quarter over quarter, the participation rate differential between veteran and veteran spouse did not vary significantly. Participation numbers for the other/not identified attendee category remained relatively consistent quarter over quarter, but their participation percentage declined as the veteran and veteran spouse numbers increased. Overall, veteran and veteran spouse attendance rates also remained fairly consistent quarter over quarter.

OBTT veteran participants identified their branch of service as 43% Army, 15% Navy, 10% Marine Corps and 9% Air Force. According to VA data regarding the veteran population in 2022, approximately 47% of veterans served in the Army, 23% in the Navy, 12% in the Marine Corps, and 19% in the Air Force.⁶ OBTT participation is mostly in line with these national percentages, with Navy and Air Force being lower than the national levels. See Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Participants by Service

Type	CY22 Q1		CY22 Q2		CY22 Q3		CY22 Q4		CY22 Totals	
	Totals	%	Totals	%	Totals	%	Totals	%	Totals	%
US Army	130	37%	164	35%	324	43%	350	51%	968	43%
US Navy	58	17%	55	12%	140	18%	93	14%	346	15%
USMC	38	11%	76	16%	74	10%	39	6%	227	10%
US Air Force	23	7%	20	4%	90	12%	68	10%	201	9%
Army National Guard	7	2%	26	5%	18	2%	22	3%	73	3%
US Army Reserve	13	4%	16	3%	4	1%	7	1%	40	2%
US Coast Guard	1	0%	7	1%	10	1%	3	<1%	21	1%
Air National Guard	0	0%	1	<1%	9	1%	2	<1%	12	1%
USN Reserve	0	0%	0	0%	6	1%	0	0%	6	<1%
USCG Reserve	5	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	5	<1%
USAF Reserve	2	1%	1	<1%	2	<1%	2	<1%	7	<1%
USMC Reserves	0	0%	0	0%	7	1%	2	<1%	9	<1%
US Space Force	0	0%	0	0%	1	<1%	0	0%	1	<1%
Attendee Other/Not Identified	70	20%	108	23%	77	10%	95	14%	350	15%
Grand Totals	347	100%	474	100%	762	100%	683	99%	2266	100%

The most telling demographic information is the time since participants' separation from service. As depicted in Figure 5 below, 45% of OBTT participants reported they had been out of the service for over ten years; 51% have been out of service eight or more years. This suggests a need for employment support among the veteran population long after their separation from service. The small percentage seeking services a year or less from separation also suggests the DOL TAP curriculum is meeting the needs of separating service members. After the first quarter of 2022, the percentage of participation based on years from separation shows consistency across the remaining quarters.

⁶ [Veteran Population - National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics \(va.gov\)](https://www.va.gov/vetpop/)

Figure 5: Participants by Time from Separation

Type	CY22 Q1		CY22 Q2		CY22 Q3		CY22 Q4		CY22 Totals	
	Totals	%	Totals	%	Totals	%	Totals	%	Totals	%
Separation: >10 years	132	38%	227	48%	338	44%	331	48%	1028	45%
Separation: 8-10 years	31	9%	22	5%	57	7%	34	5%	144	6%
Separation: 4-7 years	46	13%	40	8%	62	8%	74	11%	222	10%
Separation: 1-3 years	32	9%	22	5%	64	8%	60	9%	178	8%
Separation: <1 year	26	7%	35	7%	63	8%	29	4%	153	7%
Attendee Other/Not Identified	80	23%	128	27%	178	23%	155	23%	541	24%
Grand Totals	347	100%	474	100%	762	100%	683	100%	2266	100%

Pilot Challenges

The OBTT pilot poses several key challenges. Many of these challenges were identified with respect to the initial two-year OBTT pilot. VETS expects additional challenges to arise as the five-year pilot continues and subsequent reports to the Congress will highlight key challenges experienced during each year of the pilot. Here are some of the key challenges that VETS considered and observed during the first year of the pilot:

- The service delivery model for the OBTT pilot must be different than the DOL TAP Workshops and flexible to meet the demands of their intended audience. DOL TAP workshops are designed for a captive and concentrated audience which, with few exemptions, is mandated to attend. Conversely, OBTT pilot participants are geographically dispersed and have varying life circumstances and availability. Additionally, a lesson learned from the earlier OBTT pilot is that many OBTT participants are not able to participate over the course of several days. OBTT workshops need to be structured in a manner that allows for flexibility, in both timing and location, as well as course curricula, to ensure the availability and relevancy of the training. Some veterans value the personal interaction that in-person workshops offer and are willing to expend the effort to attend an in-person class. Other participants value the convenience of virtual, instructor-led workshops. Both formats were developed in a modularized format and included during the first year to ensure no segment of the population was excluded.
- Measuring pilot outcomes beyond OBTT workshop attendance is challenging because frameworks and policies would need to be put in place to successfully track employment outcomes of participants, which would increase pilot costs and require the expenditure of additional scarce resources. All participants are offered the opportunity to connect with an AJC following their participation in OBTT workshops. To that end, VETS is developing an identifier that will be used by AJC staff to recognize OBTT workshop participants within the Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) to assess participant employment outcome information. Employment outcome information for participants who either are not captured

in the PIRL, or who never follow through with AJC services, is not currently available to VETS. VETS would be able to obtain this information through the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) database, but gaining access would require time, to secure necessary permissions, and funding, to develop the infrastructure required to house and analyze the data. VETS is developing additional survey information that enable VETS to review participant assessments of the OBTT workshops to further ensure they are providing relevant, quality instruction.

Moving Forward in 2023

In the second year of the OBTT pilot, VETS will build upon the lessons learned from the first year of operations and will tackle any new challenges with the intent of continuing to improve the pilot and the services provided to its participants. VETS continues to connect with the veteran community to expand its outreach, increase attendance, support veteran employment, and track outcomes. VETS has established three goals to guide the program as it moves forward:

- Increase OBTT attendance numbers by increasing communication and marketing to the veterans and their spouses.
- Continue in-depth analysis of the first-year data to inform a strategic operational approach to identify best practices that aid each ERC location.
- Pivot from weekly workshops to special event workshops that partner with ongoing programs and events to support veterans' employment goals and opportunities.

As the OBTT continues to grow and expand to more locations, accomplishing these objectives will help to ensure that leadership and staff can quickly establish a presence at pilot locations and connect with the veterans in these communities.

Conclusion

Military transition is a process that happens at different intervals for every veteran, as the effect of service stays with a person throughout their life. TAP provides a strong basis to facilitate smooth service member transition into the civilian world. However, once a service member becomes a veteran, a connection to updated job placement instruction is not readily available. The data collected during the first year of the OBTT pilot suggest that many veterans still need assistance several years after their separation from service. The data also suggest that, for at least some of our veterans and military spouses, the adaptation to civilian life continues, even in small ways, years after they transition.

Full and meaningful employment is essential to a successful transition. While the benefit to the individual veteran is clear, each fully employed veteran also benefits the nation. The skills, discipline, and passion that veterans gave to defending their country can now be applied to building the American economy. Our veterans continue to serve their country – now as members of industry. Those who were once Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, Guardians and Coast Guardsmen are now programmers, electricians, accountants, managers, and professionals in thousands of other industries, working hard every day to provide for their families. The Department is honored to serve the men and women who gave their all during their service and will continue to provide back to them the services they require to empower them to be an important part of our American economy.