



## Tips for Service Members Transitioning to Federal Civilian Careers



Transitioning from the military to a civilian career in the federal government can be a rewarding and exciting change. Explore these tips and strategies to make your new mission a long-term success.

### Know your skills

Increasing numbers of employers and HR representatives have little or no military experience, and do not know how military experience translates to civilian jobs. Help them by finding ways to describe your military experience clearly and without jargon, using federal definitions. A good way to begin is to use a military skills translator like the one provided by [Monster.com](http://Monster.com).

Career success for both military personnel and civilians often depends on “soft skills”—an assortment of individual personality traits that determine how you communicate and interact with others. For example:

- ▲ Communication skills
- ▲ Adaptability/flexibility
- ▲ Teamwork/collaboration
- ▲ Problem solving
- ▲ Critical observation
- ▲ Conflict resolution
- ▲ Resourcefulness
- ▲ Resilience

Think about experiences you have had that highlight the soft skills that contributed to your military success. Include them in your resume. Share them with colleagues. Enhance them through training and work experiences.

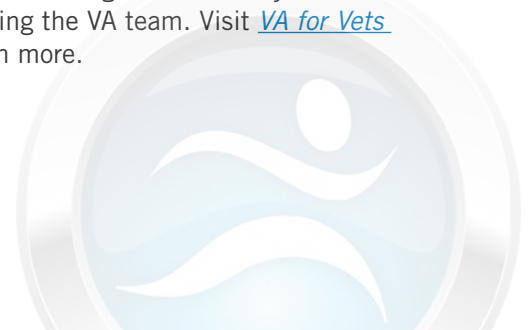
### Build your resume

A solid resume is a career seeker’s primary tool, so you will want to keep yours sharp. Your resume should give a prospective federal employer a positive impression of your knowledge, skills and abilities as they apply to the position you are seeking. As a Veteran, you will want to make sure that the words you use in your resume to highlight your military experience are easily understandable by federal hiring managers. Finally, explore the following online resources for translating military experience into terms civilian employers can relate to, as well as other strategies for building a dynamic federal resume:

- ▲ [VA for Vets Career Center – Military Skills Translator](#)
- ▲ [VA for Vets Resume Building Guide](#)

### Learn about your new agency

Whether you are going for an interview or beginning a new job, it pays to learn as much as you can about the employer. Check websites; search for news articles; talk to friends. VA has an [excellent website](#) where you’ll find details and insights for military members interested in joining the VA team. Visit [VA for Vets “Join VA”](#) to learn more.



## Understand your benefits

Working in the federal government remains an attractive option for Veterans like you who want to continue their service to others by establishing a fulfilling career in the public sector. The stability of working for a federal agency also ranks high on the list of reasons to become a federal employee. Take time to explore some of the tangible and intangible benefits you're eligible to receive as a Veteran when you start your federal career. These resources will help you get started:

- ▲ [Veterans Benefits Administration](#) – Get information on home loans, pension, insurance and more
- ▲ [Office of Personnel Management](#) – Access a full range of benefits information for federal employees

## Consider the culture

In the military you worked on a team at all times, and that fundamental concept of performing as a unit was critical to any mission or task. While the civilian workforce values teamwork and understands that such attributes lead to organizational success, the approach to building camaraderie there is different. It will likely take you more time to build a rapport with new peers in the civilian workforce. Being aware of this and other differences will help you adapt more easily so that you can focus on building a successful career. Prepare for a smooth transition from military to civilian culture with OPM's [Feds Hire Vets website](#).

## Make an impression

Getting your federal career off to a good start begins with making a great impression. Whether your first appearance in a federal setting is during the interview process, meeting with a networking contact or starting work on your first day, remember these tips to make sure it goes well:

- ▲ Dress professionally
- ▲ Wear a genuine smile
- ▲ Be approachable and friendly
- ▲ Be positive
- ▲ Demonstrate confidence and competence

## Engage your colleagues

Workplace engagement is a big factor in overall employee satisfaction. As a new federal employee, take the initiative to meet peers. With a variety of federal social media channels at your fingertips, you have more ways than ever to get connected in your new environment. Scheduling a coffee break, meeting colleagues for lunch, or participating in departmental events are also great ways to build connections.

## Find a mentor

Everyone needs career support. From the most talented federal leaders to individuals who are just starting their career, mentors are valuable “champions” to have on your side. You will find that some federal agencies have developed formal mentorship programs, while others have less structured routes to workplace support.

## What is the value of a mentor?

- ▲ Tap into the knowledge and experience of someone who can help you become familiar with the agency where you work or want to work
- ▲ Share ideas for career development beyond your immediate organization or department
- ▲ Connect with someone who can speak on your behalf to other influential leaders and hiring managers

Enjoy your success!

