



Arizona Employer's Guide to Veteran
Affiliated Employee Resource Groups
Second Edition, Revised May 2021

Dear Business Leader,

Arizona is home to more than 500,000 service members and veterans from all branches and eras of service. Arizona is also attracting more transitioning service members, veterans, spouses, and family members from across the country as word spreads about the opportunities available in a state that is prioritizing support and engagement of these members of our community.

These individuals, and their families, add a valuable dimension to our state's workforce through their unique skillsets, training and experience. To extend this advantage, we have found, and research indicates, that a well-developed Veteran Affiliated Employee Resource Group (VAERG) further supports hiring and retention efforts and has a positive impact on organizational culture, employee satisfaction, and community relations.

As Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers (AVSEs), members of the Arizona Corporate Council on Veteran Careers (ACCVC) and veteran and workforce stakeholders, our efforts are aimed towards setting the highest standards in hiring, retention, and growth of veteran affiliated employees. In order to support your commitment to this population, the members of the ACCVC want to provide you with this guide, more information available on our website and, upon request, technical assistance. These services are provided to any Arizona employer at no cost with the goal of sharing best practices and deepening the opportunities available to those who call Arizona home.

We applaud your interest in taking a more active role in supporting our state's military affiliated workforce. We invite you to visit our website at www.ConnectVeterans.org/ACCVC for the latest resources, tools, technical assistance, and events to activate, empower and engage Arizona's military affiliated workforce.

Sincerely,



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Director, Arizona Department of Veterans' Services



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The Arizona Corporate Council on Veteran Careers (ACCVC) was formed in 2016 to support Arizona companies in harnessing the talents of service members (active duty, Guard and Reserve), veterans and their family members. The Council's mission is to engage, educate and empower Arizona organizations with tools and resources to foster meaningful career opportunities and career advancement for the veteran and military affiliated workforce.

The ACCVC is a [Be Connected®](#) Employer Network, a collaborative group of employers that have received the Arizona Veteran Supportive Employer (AVSE) designation and are aligned with Arizona's Roadmap to Veteran Employment. This effort is led by the [Arizona Coalition for Military Families](#) and the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, in partnership with the Governor's Office, Arizona Department of Economic Security, Arizona Commerce Authority, Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity, the Arizona Chamber for Commerce and Industry and other key stakeholders.

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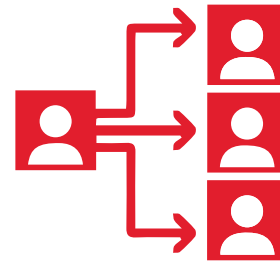
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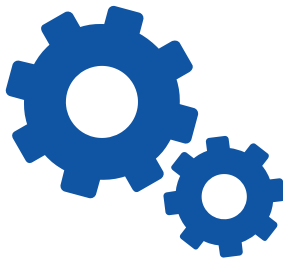
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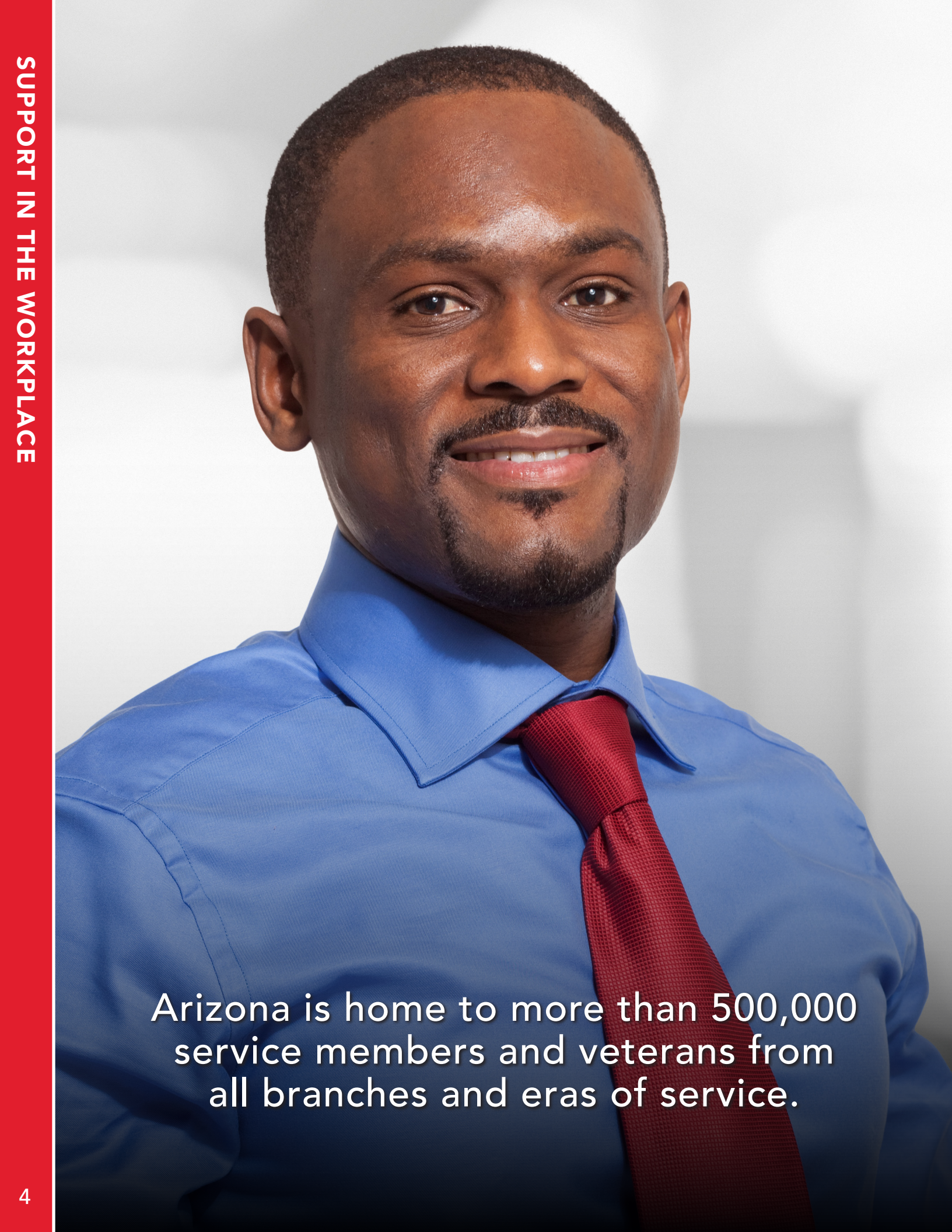


This is a publication of the Arizona Corporate Council on Veteran Careers - A Be Connected Employer Network

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Arizona Department of Veterans' Services
Arizona Public Service
Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family
Office of the Governor
TriWest Healthcare Alliance
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
USAA

A portrait of a Black man with a short beard and mustache, smiling. He is wearing a blue dress shirt and a red tie. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white.

Arizona is home to more than 500,000
service members and veterans from
all branches and eras of service.

Veterans comprised **7.0%** of the Arizona workforce during 2018, a higher rate than the nation at **5.9%.**

COMMON INTERESTS

Employee resource groups (ERGs) bring together like-minded employees who share common interests with the aim of driving business impact. ERGs are ways for employers to foster a diverse, yet inclusive forum. ERG members can connect to develop personally and professionally through networking, mentoring, volunteerism and involvement in initiatives that align with the organizational mission, values, goals and business objectives.

SUPPORT STRUCTURE

Veteran Affiliated Employee Resource Groups (VAERG) offer a welcoming and inspiring environment for veterans and veteran supportive employees to provide a forum within the organization to provide context and counsel to the organization on matters relating to veteran and military affiliated employees.



VAERGs offer veterans career development training, aid members to move and grow within the organization, raise members' visibility within the organization, and act as a forum to discuss leadership in the civilian workplace.

“The dedication, commitment and valuable talent of all who have bravely served our country are an important dimension of diversity in our state’s workforce and a signal to the nation that Arizona is open for business with a strong and supportive business community.”

– Dawn Grove, Corporate Counsel, Karsten Manufacturing Company
Chair, Workforce Arizona Council

Organizations that use **VAERGs** in their recruitment initiatives continuously reinforce their organization's veteran workforce pipeline and positively position their organization as a veteran friendly place to work.

The numerous benefits of developing and supporting a VAERG are symbiotic for the organization and employees. These benefits can be grouped into these categories:

RECRUITMENT

An organization that is outwardly promoting how it is veteran friendly during the recruitment process will attract veteran and military affiliated candidates.

The presence of a VAERG signals to candidates that there is a supportive environment within the organization already in place for veteran and military affiliated people. Candidates understand immediately that the existence of a VAERG creates a platform and structure that will be available to provide a supportive environment as they move through the onboarding process and beyond.

Veteran and military affiliated ERGs play a critical role in an organization's effort to attract talent, recruit veterans and transitioning military members while instilling a foundation to help veterans become acclimated to the organization.

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Although members of the military and veteran community have advanced training working with diverse cultures, are adaptive in a changing landscape, are resilient and reliably perform well with minimal instruction, they can sometimes feel a loss of the camaraderie they once enjoyed in the military. A VAERG can provide a place for veteran and military affiliated employees

to stay in touch with those who understand the military experience. Relating to people with a familiar past experience helps foster a shared identity, sense of belonging and a lasting connection. VAERG benefits extend to all employees by offering networking, events and social engagement.

SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTISE

VAERGs are an important component of building a military and veteran friendly culture within an organization. Members of the VAERG can help incoming veterans better navigate their new work environment. VAERGs can serve as an important vehicle for disseminating information to veteran employees within the company about the organization and its policies.

The members of the group can help offer context, counsel and training and serve as a sounding board for proposed changes to policy and even craft new policy related to veteran and military affiliated employees. VAERGs are a valuable resource for non-veterans in the organization to learn about the values, experiences and skillsets that veterans bring to the workplace and dispel myths about the military lifestyle.

CONNECTION

Once a veteran or military affiliated employee has integrated into the

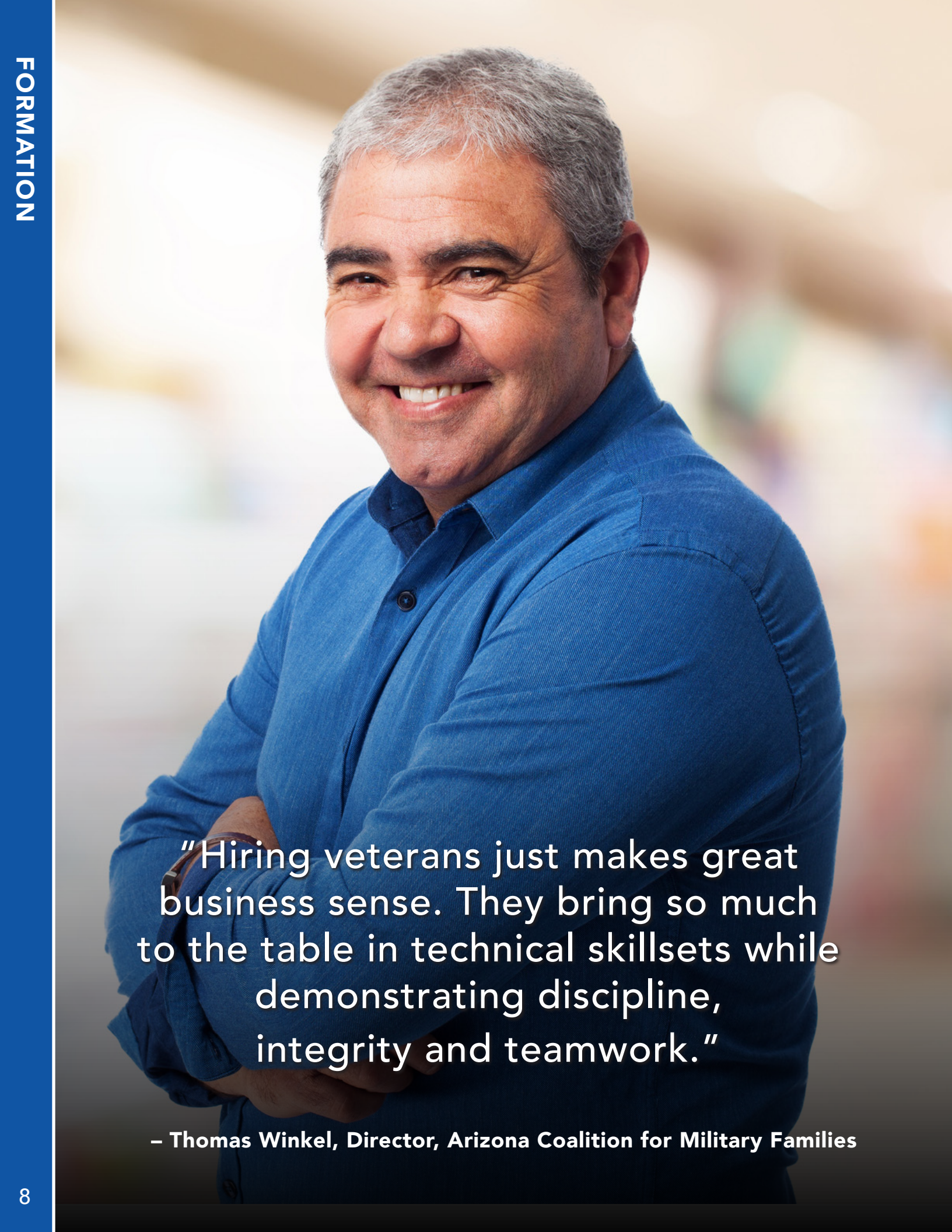
organization, their participation in a VAERG can help foster connections that can lead to their continued sense of connection to the organization. The support and camaraderie for any employee who participates in a VAERG is a natural environment for mentoring and networking and help participating employees learn take an active role in building their career. The VAERG offers a win-win in that employees gain a career developing support system that helps the organization develop and retain the best talent.

VALUES IN ACTION

The active development of a VAERG helps formalize an organization's commitment to living its values. By supporting and facilitating a VAERG and its ongoing initiatives to support veterans, an organization gains an important platform and activated employee base to turn ideas, values and mission into action and results.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Social issues are an important factor at the forefront of today's public opinion and brand loyalty. Living the value of being a veteran supportive organization is an authentic pathway to cultivate positive public relations, elevating the organization's brand value and reputation.




"Hiring veterans just makes great business sense. They bring so much to the table in technical skillsets while demonstrating discipline, integrity and teamwork."

– Thomas Winkel, Director, Arizona Coalition for Military Families

A Veteran Affiliated Employee Resource Group can give you an edge when competing with other employers to draw the best talent to your business.

- ❑ Start the VAERG small and allow it to build slowly, over time.
- ❑ Ensure that events and initiatives help strengthen the connection, mentorship and support between employees so that they can gain confidence and advance their careers.
- ❑ Be sure to work with your organization's Communications and Human Resources Departments to promote the VAERG on the organization's Linked-In page, Human Resources web and intranet pages and recruitment materials.
- ❑ Consider partnering with Human Resources to formalize a connection between the VAERG and incoming veterans and military affiliated employees in the form of a "sponsor" who can help show the incoming employee the ropes, be a source of information and provide a friendly face while onboarding.
- ❑ Consider ways to promote the mission and goals of the VAERG through veteran and military appreciation events and displays throughout the workplace. These initiatives can help educate and raise awareness.

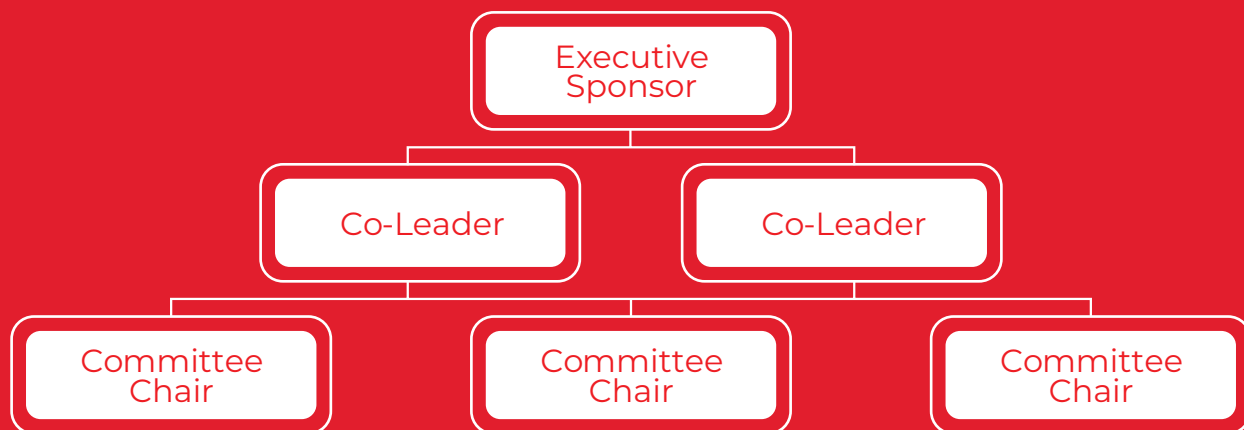




"We ensure that our veteran affiliated employee resource group is open to all so that we have a diverse group of voices to inform and shape our policies that affect military families and veterans within our workforce."

– Donna Hoffmeier, Senior Vice President of
Strategic Communications & Advocacy, TriWest Healthcare Alliance

A VAERG structure should suit the organizational needs. Most VAERGs have these main roles in common:



This is one configuration of a VAERG.

EXECUTIVE SPONSOR (DIRECTOR LEVEL OR HIGHER)

Serves as a guide to ensure that the VAERG remains aligned to the overall organizational goals, the group's mission and strategy. When needed, the Executive Sponsor can escalate issues.

EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUP CO-LEADERS

These people are committed to the growth and development of the VAERG. The Co-Leaders must receive the endorsement of their immediate supervisors and be in good performance standing. They host and run consistent meetings and work closely with the Committee Chairs and members to plan activities that align with the decided goals. They are a driving force to educate all employees on

the VAERG's message, events and strategy. The Co-Leaders identify and encourage members to remain active by serving as committee Co-Leaders and encouraging and recruiting other members to volunteer. Co-Leaders must demonstrate a willingness to learn and develop as they positively represent and promote the VAERG.

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Committee Chairs lead and guide the planning, scheduling and implementation of activities and events that support the VAERG's vision, mission and goals. Committee Chairs assist in encouraging and recruiting other members to volunteer and become active. Chairs must attend the majority of VAERG meetings and events as well as work closely with other committee

members and VAERG Leader to determine and record the return on investment of events. Committee Chairs must positively represent and promote the VAERG.


MEMBERS

Members of the VAERG should contribute ideas, feedback and opinions; participate in activities; join at least one committee; and attend the majority of VAERG meetings.

SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS

Some groups may elect to develop subcommittees, as needed, to manage events, issues or topics.





Companies that showcase their Veteran Affiliated Employee Resource Groups on their recruiting page are taking an active step to cultivate a pipeline of highly qualified military spouses and partners - an important component of a diversified workforce.

For more information, or to request technical assistance, we invite you to visit our website at www.ConnectVeterans.org/ACCVV.

FORMATION PROCESS OVERVIEW



Identify veterans, Guard or Reserve members, family members of veterans or service members and anyone who shares a passion for helping veterans and will champion the VAERG.



Solicit the sponsorship of senior leadership or human resources to represent and support the group.



Work with leaders to establish a clear purpose for the VAERG that is directly tied to organizational values, mission and business goals. Articulate what the VAERG will do to engage and support veteran and military affiliated employees from recruitment to retirement.



Develop the group's structure.



Develop a business plan to include bylaws, objectives, goals and committees.



Formulate a membership and outreach strategy with a communication plan.



Schedule a regular pace of meetings (at least once per quarter) to discuss business matters, challenges, needs and successes.

More than **90%** of
Fortune 500 firms have a type
of employee resource group.

CHECKLIST

When creating a VAERG, it is important to keep in mind that it does take time to develop the group at each stage of its lifecycle. There is no defined timeline to this journey. Each organization will move at its own pace as the group develops and sustains the growth of each phase.

Visit www.ConnectVeterans.org/ACCVC for more information and resources to assist on this journey.

STEPS	ACTIONS	TASKS
1	RESEARCH & PLANNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Business Case • Case Create Mission Statement • Secure Executive Sponsor • Observe Other ERGs • Establish Mission and Goals
2	STRUCTURE & NAMING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Roles • Define Meeting Details • Name the Group
3	NETWORKING & COMMUNICATING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share Group Details • Develop Marketing Materials • Leverage Internal Channels • Network With Other ERGs
4	BUDGETING & FUNDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare Budget • Submit Budget • Raise Funds
5	MOMENTUM & MEASUREMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate Visibility • Solicit Feedback • Define & Track Measures • Report & Share Successes

LEVERAGE EXISTING EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

- How the group was started?
- What steps were taken to seek approval?
- What obstacles came up along the way?
- How were those obstacles managed?
- When, where and how often are meetings held?
- What is on a typical meeting agenda?

STEP 1: RESEARCH & PLANNING

- ☐ Create a business case with a clear purpose of why the group is forming
- ☐ Articulate a mission statement tied to a business objective
- ☐ Secure executive sponsorship
- ☐ Request permission to observe other VAERGs
- ☐ Establish the group's mission and goals collaboratively
- ☐ The mission statement should articulate the group's core values and purpose
- ☐ Long and short term goals should be clearly articulated activities, including timelines, projected budget, resources and measurements

STEP 2: STRUCTURING & NAMING

- ☐ Establish specific roles for members as a group – see page 11
- ☐ Define regular meeting schedule with dates, times, places, duration
- ☐ Create an alternative plan for those unable to attend in person (virtual meeting link)
- ☐ Collectively brainstorm a name for the group that reflects its mission and values

STEP 3: NETWORKING & COMMUNICATING

- ☐ Share the group's values, mission, goals, name, structure and meetings with Executive Sponsor, Human Resources and employees
- ☐ Develop materials to introduce the group to the organization
- ☐ Leverage existing organizational communication channels to debut the group: intranet, newsletter, email blast, bulletin boards
- ☐ Develop relationships with other Employee Resource Groups

STEP 4: BUDGETING & FUNDING

- ☐ Prepare a preliminary budget
- ☐ Submit that budget to the Executive Sponsor
- ☐ If corporate funds are not possible, consider alternatives: membership fees; funding from represented departments; grants; fundraisers; requesting donations

STEP 5: MOMENTUM & MEASUREMENT

- ☐ Maintain credibility by adhering to mission, objectives and timelines
- ☐ Continuously work to promote the VAERG
- ☐ Generate visibility by conducting or participating in networking events, workshops on veteran topics related to the program, lunch & learn seminars, and celebrating national awareness campaigns
- ☐ Ask for feedback from members
- ☐ Workshop areas for improvement
- ☐ Define success measurements and track at regular intervals
- ☐ Develop reports to encapsulate successes in writing
- ☐ Share progress and success utilizing all internal communication resources



For more information, visit www.ConnectVeterans.org/ACCVV
or call 866-4AZ-VETS.