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VETREADY
ARIZONA

VetReady Arizona

A statewide strategy aligning employers, the workforce system, and military-connected talent to drive economic growth.

Arizona is positioned to win the competition for military-connected talent. VetReady Arizona turns that position into strategy.

What is VetReady Arizona

VetReady Arizona provides a framework for aligning and elevating the strengths Arizona already has Rather than creating an entirely new initiative from the ground up, it would organize and strengthen how state agencies, workforce systems, employers, military transition partners, family-support partners, and community organizations work together around a shared statewide goal: **making Arizona the one of the best places in the country for service members, veterans, military spouses, caregivers and their families to live, work, and thrive. The payoff is concrete: employers gain proven talent, families put down roots, and Arizona builds the workforce its growth depends on**.

One helpful way to understand VetReady Arizona as the next step in a progression:

- Veteran Friendly is welcoming.
- Veteran Supportive helps military-connected families navigate and move forward.
- Veteran Ready builds environments where military-connected families thrive — and employers find and keep the talent to grow.

At its core, VetReady Arizona is a statewide way to communicate, coordinate, and measure what Arizona can offer military-connected families — meaningful careers, practical support, connection to care, community belonging, and long-term stability — and what those families offer Arizona employers: leadership and mission-focus that translate directly to their bottom line.

Why this Matters Now

Each year, transitioning service members decide where they will build their lives after military service. Many of those decisions are made right here in Arizona at our Active-Duty Military bases. At the same time, military-connected families across the country are evaluating where they can find opportunity, stability, and a supportive environment for long-term success.

Arizona should view this as more than a veteran issue. It is a workforce issue, an economic competitiveness issue, and a statewide quality-of-life issue.

As Arizona continues to grow in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, aerospace and defense, healthcare, construction, logistics, information technology, and public service, the state will benefit from stronger access to leadership-ready, technically skilled, mission-driven talent. OEO projects Arizona employment to grow from 3,496,247 jobs in 2024 to 3,950,414 jobs in 2034, with especially strong annual growth in health care and social assistance (2.1%), construction (2.1%), and manufacturing (1.4%).[1]

Service members, veterans, military spouses, and their families represent one of the most promising talent pipelines available to the state. They bring leadership, adaptability, discipline, technical training, and a demonstrated ability to perform in high-accountability environments.

Retaining more of that talent and attracting more of it to Arizona supports both employer demand and long-term economic resilience. It also strengthens the conditions that help military connected families remain connected, supported, and stable beyond the point of hire. Arizona veterans ages 18-34 have a 5.3% unemployment rate compared with 6.7% for Arizona non-veterans of the same age, and Arizona veterans ages 18-54 show strong educational attainment, with 45.1% having some college or an associate degree and 34.0% holding a bachelor's degree or higher.[2]

This is also a transition and whole-family stability issue. Employment remains a leading hook, but the decision to stay in or choose Arizona is shaped by whether families can access healthcare, school and education options, spouse employment, benefits navigation, housing and financial stability, social connection, and a community where they can build purpose after service. That whole-person lens matters because Arizona veterans ages 18-34 had a suicide rate of 61.4 per 100,000 in 2023, compared with 46.7 for all Arizona veterans.[3]

How This Aligns With the Governor's Challenge and Military Transition Intercept Model (MTIM)

VetReady Arizona also gives Arizona a practical way to connect its veteran-ready workforce strategy with the VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge and the MTIM and their technical assistance support.[5]

MTIM recognizes transition as a multidimensional process rather than a single event. It gives partners a common way to map what Arizona already does across six points in the transition timeline, five outcome domains, and four delivery principles: respect, honesty, adaptability, and responsivity.[4,5]

For VetReady Arizona, the value of MTIM is simple: it helps ensure the state's message and systems reach military-connected families early, stay connected during the first year after separation, and keep supporting long-term community participation, purpose, and growth. It also supports practical action planning through environmental scanning, partner input, and the Domain Selection Tool, helping the state identify strengths, gaps, and implementation priorities across the transition timeline.[5]

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Arizona's Assets Already in Place

What distinguishes Arizona is that the state is not starting from scratch. Arizona already has the Be Connected® Ecosystem of Support, a coordinated, trusted infrastructure that helps service members, veterans, and their families navigate employment, healthcare, education, family supports, community resources, and the practical realities that shape successful transitions.[6]

Arizona also has a strong foundation for workforce alignment through the Arizona Roadmap to Veteran Employment and through the existing leadership of state agencies, workforce entities, employers, education and training partners, and community organizations. Taken together, these assets form a real strategic advantage: Arizona can offer not only opportunity, but a credible support system that helps military-connected families succeed once they arrive. That foundation is reinforced by broader state workforce investments such as Talent Ready AZ, which is strengthening pipelines in advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, broadband, and aerospace and defense.[6,7]

Arizona's advantage includes:

- ✓ A nationally recognized Ecosystem of Support through Be Connected
- ✓ Cross-sector leadership across public, private, and nonprofit partners
- ✓ A collaborative model that shares responsibility for what people actually experience
- ✓ A credible value proposition for military-connected families deciding where to live and build a future
- ✓ A strong workforce and employer alignment foundation
- ✓ State-level access to transition data and planning tools that can help partners identify strengths, gaps, and measurable priorities

Five Domains of Action

Using MTIM as a planning lens, VetReady Arizona can organize existing and future partner activity across five practical domains with workforce and economic competitiveness as the organizing priority.

1 Work, Education, and Training

Present Arizona through one clear, consistent veteran-ready value proposition; reach military connected talent early in the transition decision window; and make employer participation and career pathway connections easier and more coordinated by aligning work, education, and training opportunities with skills and interests.

Be Connected® is a registered trademark of the Arizona Coalition for Military Families.

2 Family and Social Connections

Support whole-family stability and community integration as part of long-term retention by reinforcing spouse employment, education continuity, caregiver and family supports, peer connection, and relationships with neighbors, co-workers, and community.

3 Physical and Emotional Health

Keep connection to healthcare and behavioral health resources visible and practical through warm handoffs, peer navigation, and trusted community partners so support is easier to access before, during, and after relocation.

4 Wellbeing and Spirituality

Help families meet practical needs like housing, food, benefits navigation, and financial stability while supporting purpose, personal growth, spiritual connection when desired, and life satisfaction beyond the uniform.

5 Community Integration and Natural Environment

Help military-connected families put down roots in Arizona communities — building civic, social, volunteer, and outdoor connections that create belonging and renewed purpose after service.

What changes with VetReady Arizona

- Strong assets become a more coordinated statewide strategy.
- Employers gain clearer pathways to proven talent — easing workforce shortages, reducing turnover, and reclaiming value lost to underemployment.
- Military-connected families navigate one coordinated system instead of a maze of disconnected programs.
- Partners identify strengths, gaps, and priority actions using a shared framework.
- Strategic direction is guided by input and data from employers, public/private workforce partners, interest groups and the people they serve.

How Progress Will Be Measured and What Parners Can Do

VetReady Arizona should track **measurable results** in retention, employment, underemployment, employer engagement, referrals and warm handoffs, partner participation, family and community connection, and system coordination. The Governor's Challenge process adds a useful way to do this through environmental scanning and partner input: identify current programs, map them to the domains and transition timeline, select priority strengths or gaps, and develop implementation measures.[5] Arizona already has baseline indicators that can help support this work, including 251,300 VHA enrollees, 994 homeless veterans in the 2024 point-in-time count, and 21 veteran treatment courts.[2]

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For the Governor's Office and state agency partners like Governor's Office of Youth, Faith & Family, Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, Arizona Department of Economic Services, the Arizona Commerce Authority and the Office of Economic Opportunity who have already invested in Be Connected, VetReady Arizona offers a practical structure for aligning workforce, economic development, military transition, and family-support priorities without duplicating existing efforts. It also gives those partners a way to connect Governor's Challenge planning to a broader statewide value proposition that employers, communities, and families can understand.

For Employers, Chambers of Commerce, GPEC, and Industry Partners, VetReady Arizona creates a clearer pathway to one of the nation's strongest talent pools while reinforcing Arizona's reputation as a top place for military-connected households to build stable, long-term futures. Employer engagement is built on clear entry points, meaningful career pathways, and retention supports that recognize the needs of the whole military-connected household. It also builds employer capability in attracting, hiring, and retaining military-connected talent — so companies don't just find this talent, they develop its full potential and keep it.

For community and service partners, including Be Connected's 400+ partner organizations, it reinforces the value of a coordinated front door through Be Connected and helps ensure that support systems remain visible, connected, and responsive to the needs of military-connected families. It also helps partners see where their current work fits in a statewide transition strategy and where deeper coordination could improve transitions for families.

All Partners Can Contribute By

- ✓ Using the shared VetReady message.
- ✓ Directing service members, veterans, and families to the VetReady Arizona pathway.
- ✓ Expanding employer engagement, employment-cycle best practices, and meaningful career pathways.
- ✓ Sharing practical data to guide continuous improvement.
- ✓ Mapping programs to the transition domains and timeline.

Arizona is not only veteran-friendly. Arizona is veteran-ready.

Conclusion

Arizona already has a meaningful head start: strong industry demand, a major military and veteran presence, established cross-sector partnerships, and a nationally recognized Ecosystem of Support through Be Connected. These are not isolated strengths. Together, they form the foundation for a statewide workforce strategy that retains more transitioning service members, attracts more military-connected families, and supports whole-family stability. **The result: a stronger workforce and a more competitive Arizona economy.**

VetReady Arizona offers a practical way to organize that work, measure it, and communicate it more clearly. Arizona is a state ready to welcome service members, veterans, military spouses, caregivers, survivors, and their families to live, work, and thrive.

Selected Sources

1. Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity. *2024-2034 Industry Employment Projections.* November 13, 2025.

   Projected Employment Report | OEO Employment Projections

2. *Military Veteran Transitions:* Arizona Data Report. 2026.

3. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. *Arizona Veteran Suicide Data Sheet, 2023* (released with the 2025 State Data Sheets).

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4. SAMHSA SMVF TA Center. The Military Transition Intercept Model (MTIM). 2026. SAMHSA TA Center

5. VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF). *Arizona Pre-Academy Site Visit: Military Veteran Transitions*. April 2026.

   SAMHSA TA Center and SAMHSA Site Visits

6. Be Connected / ConnectVeterans.org. *Welcome to ConnectVeterans.org*. Be Connected / ConnectVeterans.org. *Arizona Roadmap to Veteran Employment*. Direct Roadmap PDF

7. Arizona Commerce Authority. *Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report*. Workforce Development / Talent Ready AZ section. June 30, 2025.

   FY25 Annual Report | ACS Annual Results

   Talent Ready AZ section begins on p. 24.

Note: The VetReady Arizona Initiative was informed by the 2014 Arizona Roadmap to Veteran Employment and the cross-sector partners that participate in its Arizona Veteran Employment Committee (AVEC). Gatherings were held in multiple locations across Arizona to include Arizona's urban, rural areas and the tribal nations. VetReady Arizona can be considered the Roadmap's 2.0 version and will incorporate the fundamentals from the original effort. For further information on that effort and a full list of partners please go to ConnectVeterans.org/Roadmap.