CLEARINGHOUSE
FOR MILITARY FAMILY READINESS

Army Community Service Employment Readiness Program Outcome Evaluation Report

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As of September, 2020

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Executive Summary

The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse) was tasked to conduct an outcome evaluation of the Army Community Service's (ACS) Employment Readiness Program (ERP), a program that provides localized employment assistance at garrisons world-wide. Historically, the ERP focused almost entirely on helping Army spouses find employment opportunities at each duty station. Yet, as the Army continues to downsize, there are increasing employment services needed by Service members transitioning to civilian employment. This outcome evaluation was conducted to assess the ERP's effectiveness with employment outcomes for all participants. Specifically, the evaluation had five aims:

- o <u>Aim 1</u>: Examine whether the ERP improves employment related outcomes among program participants (e.g., job status, job satisfaction, employment related self-efficacy skills).
- o <u>Aim 2</u>: Assess whether the ERP improves satisfaction with military life (e.g., readiness, retention, financial stability and satisfaction).
- o <u>Aim 3</u>: Gauge program user satisfaction with the ERP (e.g., did the user have a positive experience, what are the most used programs and services?).
- o <u>Aim 4</u>: Examine whether the ERP is more or less effective across different groups of participants (e.g., spouses, Service members, users of specific programs or services).
- o <u>Aim 5</u>: Provide targeted recommendations to the Army for continuous quality improvement of the ERP.

This report presents a literature review and describes evaluation methods, results, and actionable recommendations. First, a literature review on unemployment and underemployment within the military context is presented to better understand these conditions. Moreover, the literature review identifies important components of employment programs. The data was collected from a retrospective sample (n=222) of past ERP participants that included one wave of data, and a prospective sample (n=54), of current ERP participants, that included three waves of data. An online survey was employed to collect the information. In addition, telephonic interviews were conducted with a sample of Army spouses who completed the online survey. Finally, information was obtained from site visits and in-depth telephonic interviews with program managers at four garrisons (CONUS and OCONUS) to add context to the ERP evaluation.

Findings

The findings are presented in terms of the primary aims of the evaluation and include the following:

- o <u>Aim 1</u>:
  - o Approximately half of the participants, in both retrospective and prospective samples, attributed obtainment of a job to ERP.
  - o Almost half of retrospective survey participants and over one third of prospective survey participants who did not receive a job received a job interview.
- o <u>Aim 2</u>:
  - o 63% of retrospective survey participants and 49% of prospective survey participants at Wave 1 indicated that they were in good shape financially.

- o Over 90% of ERP participants experienced some level of financial worry. 34% of retrospective survey participants and 47% of prospective survey participants at Wave 1 rated their financial worry as high.
- o The most common financial challenges were trouble paying bills and debts, preparation for military transition, and non-military spouse employment. When accounting for transition preparation and non-military spouse employment challenges, less than half of the sample had experienced a financial or legal situation, which may suggest that these are important challenges for spouses and Service members.
- o Satisfaction with the military lifestyle was high for both samples with means ranging from 3.8 – 4.0, with 4.0 indicating "very satisfied".
- o 66% of spouses participating in the retrospective survey favored their spouse staying in the military. For spouses participating in the prospective survey, preference for retention decreased slightly over time; at Wave 1, 61% favored staying in the military and at Wave 3, 50% favored staying.
  - o Aim 3:
    - o Over 90% of ERP participants were highly satisfied with the overall ERP and individual ERP services.
    - o The most used ERP service was resume writing, especially resume writing for federal jobs.
    - o The most commonly used military resource for employment, besides the ERP, was Military OneSource.
    - o Approximately half of participants in the prospective survey sample (n=18) were using the ERP 90 days after their initial engagement with the program.
  - o Aim 4:
    - o No differences in job outcomes were found between different types of users or different types of ERP service usage.
    - o 58% (n=4) of spouses in the prospective survey sample at Wave 1 reported being "very satisfied" with the extent that their job utilized their knowledge, skills, and abilities compared to only 25% (n=1) of Service members.
    - o Approximately 80% (n=11) of prospective survey participant Service members at Wave 1 were satisfied with how the military supports their family, while only 53% (n=18) of spouses were satisfied.
    - o The average job search skills efficacy (JSSE) score was high (3.2 out of 4 with 4 being "very confident") as a result of participating in the program, and remained high across the three waves of data collected from the prospective study. This finding indicates that the program bolsters important job search skills for both job seekers and those not seeking work at the time of the survey.

Recommendations

Aim 5 of this effort was to provide targeted recommendations to the Army for continuous quality improvement of the ERP. The recommendations below are based on the data collected and are also informed by a recent National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM, 2019) report on strengthening the military family readiness system. These recommendations are actionable; thus, each recommendation was considered in terms of fit within the current ACS ERP

infrastructure and weighed against practical considerations (e.g., existing implementation strategies, staffing, cost).

Infrastructure

Recommendation 1: Coordinate and leverage other military-affiliated employment services to efficiently address the needs of all participant types.

- For example, collaborate with SFL-TAP to provide services tailored to Service members, allowing ERP to focus on providing content to spouses.
- Coordinate with other military spouse-employment programs (e.g., SECO, MSEP) to ensure a full range of services are provided, thereby reducing potential unnecessary redundancies.

Program content

Recommendation 2.1: Create a standardized decision-tree tool for determining the services needed by participants Army-wide and, thus, create a record of services provided as program participants receive services across the enterprise (see recommendation 5.1 below).

Recommendation 2.2: Utilize evidence-informed components of employment programs (see Perkins et al., 2020).

- Deploy content and skill-based activities that teach job-seeking skills such as increasing professional networking behavior (i.e., contacting previous employers or professional contacts to inquire about possible job leads). Note, networking is a skill that evaluation data suggested could be improved upon among program participants.
- Utilize a strength-based program framework that addresses the emotional and psychological needs of job seekers and military spouses, in particular (i.e., focus on the strengths of the job seeker to increase the motivation and confident use of these skills).

Recommendation 2.3: Develop and utilize effective online employment services tailored for military populations (e.g., online options for offering Federal resume writing and the Federal job-search classes; see Perkins et al., 2020).

Recommendation 2.4: Develop and maintain an Army-wide database of virtual and remote job opportunities.

- Collaborate with other spouse employment programs (e.g., MSEP, SECO) focused on identifying and advertising virtual and telework opportunities at the national level.

Recommendation 2.5: Increase efforts to identify resources to support entrepreneurship opportunities and address common challenges.

Recommendation 2.6: Offer tailored services to address the unique needs of military spouses across the professional continuum (e.g., entry level versus professional level options, understand credentialing and licensure requirements and

policies designed to help spouses—see policy level initiatives, page 11).

Recommendation 2.7: Examine current ERP content and how this content is delivered.
- Consider hosting learning communities and utilizing reading about interviewing and resume writing online as the basis for discussion.
- Continue to offer and refine resume writing with direct instruction.
- Other effective components include the following: interviewing with direct instruction or a mentor/coach, resume writing using an online tool and mentor/coach, career planning through reading online and direct instruction and mentor/coach, using entrepreneurship with a mentor coach, and offering job accommodations with direct instruction.

Program implementation
Recommendation 3.1: Add "spouse to meet with ERP prior to moving" as a part of the PCS preparation checklist to help spouses who are interested in working understand the employment opportunities available at the next duty station and to expedite securing of employment.
- Provide referrals for child care resources in advance of a PCS to help expedite a sometimes lengthy process of obtaining child care.

Recommendation 3.2: Establish follow-up protocols for staff to provide consistent ongoing services and tailored support.

Recommendation 3.3: Ensure that all ERP staff have the professional credentials required to perform the job (e.g., Certified Career Services Provider credentials).

Recommendation 3.4: Ensure adequate technological resources (e.g., computers with internet access, printers) are available and maintained for program participants to use.

Program reach
Recommendation 4.1 Provide resources that break down barriers for employment at OCONUS garrisons (e.g., offer intensive language classes, prioritize telework options available in SOFA countries, provide guidance on visa requirements, inform about tax implications of local employment).

Recommendation 4.2: For face-to-face classes, utilize evidence-informed barrier reduction techniques (e.g., offer child care, meals, and sessions at night).
- Utilize multi-pronged marketing practices (e.g., ensure that ERP staff have access to spouse-focused social media, such as spouse/partner pages and local Soldier Family Readiness Groups) to target spouse participants.
- Work with CYS to find creative ways to offer child care during service provision.

Data collection and evaluation
Recommendation 5.1: Implement an intake assessment tool for continuous identification and

assessment of need to link participants to tailored programs and services.

Recommendation 5.2: Develop an integrated information infrastructure that relies on regularly collected process and outcome data, analytical ability, and an organizational mindset that is open to data-informed improvement and change (see chapter 8 of NASEM 2019 report for details).

Introduction to the Effort

In 2015, the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse) collaborated with the Deputy Chief of Staff G-9, Installations (DCS, G-9), formerly the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management (OACSIM), and the Installation Management Command (IMCOM) to conduct evaluability assessments of select Army Community Service (ACS) programs. As a result of the assessments, in 2017, the Employment Readiness Program (ERP) was chosen by this team for an outcome evaluation to better understand the program's effectiveness at helping program participants find employment.

Goals & Objectives of the Employment Readiness Program

As a program offered by ACS, the ERP was originally designed to target the unique employment needs (e.g., frequent relocation) of Army spouses. In more recent years as the Army has downsized, the ERP has been adapting in an effort to support the needs of transitioning Soldiers. Thus, the ERP presently provides assistance to Soldiers, retirees, Department of Defense (DoD) civilians, and Army family members by helping them acquire skills, networks, and resources that will allow them to participate in the work force and develop a career/work plan. The ERP works to prevent unemployment or underemployment throughout the larger military service population.

Key Program Elements

As per the ACS model, the specific programs and services offered vary by garrison needs; however, there are some key program elements required by Army Regulation (AR) 608-1 (Personal Affairs), for example, offering job fairs two times per year. In addition, the ERP falls within the Category 1 Standards that identify programs backed by Public Law. During the 2015-2016 evaluability assessment, the ERP was found to have a mission statement, a strategic plan, and a desk guide for the program manager (PM). While schedules of activities are based on garrison needs (e.g., garrison proximity to job markets, spouse education level, OCONUS garrisons with limited employment options), the ERP is broadly comprised of the following components:

- *Classes:* Some topics include: Resume Writing for Civilians, Resume Writing for Federal Jobs, Federal Jobs Search, Networking, Interview Skills and Mock Interviews, Dress for Success, and Boots to Business.
- *Career Counseling:* The PM provides one-on-one career counseling to help manage or match expectations for jobs of interest and identify transferrable skills. In addition, the PMs

help the clients develop the knowledge and skills necessary for targeting employment in career fields of interests.

- *Employer Networking & Outreach*: The PM connects clients with employers, professional organizations, and associations by posting announcements digitally via an email distribution list and physically on-site at the ACS center; social media may also be used.
- *Job or Career Fairs:* Two job fairs per year are required by AR. Required job fairs may be held in conjunction or in partnership with local organizations and may be promoted more extensively to gain the broadest exposure on and off base.
- *Maintenance of Computer Banks for Client Job Searching:* The ERP is required to have a computer bank available for job seekers, which is normally found within the ACS center.
- *Marketing:* The PM actively markets the program through garrison media campaigns, and classes are posted via social media, newsletters, and marquees.

Literature Review

There is an increasing body of research that examines employment outcomes in military populations – specifically among military spouses, transitioning Service members, and veterans. However, the focus in these populations is on the state of employment, the challenges faced by members of these groups, or specific programs; the focus is not on broad solutions to increase employment. This literature review focuses on the effect of unemployment and underemployment within the general population, individual factors that affect employability, the state of military spouse employment, current services and supports for military family employment, and potential strategies to increase success in finding meaningful employment.

The Effect of Unemployment and Underemployment

Unemployment can create financial hardship due to the loss of income. Outside of providing a means of financial support, employment provides a number of functions to individuals, including time structure, social contacts, social purpose, status and identity, and regular activities (Kunze & Suppa, 2017). Thus, unemployed individuals can suffer economic and social hardships. However, job loss also has other well-documented impacts on individuals, such as mental health concerns, family conflict, violence, substance use, and decreased life satisfaction (Kunze & Suppa, 2017; Price & Vinokur, 2014).

The effects of unemployment may also contribute to an individual's ability to find employment. Unemployed individuals are less likely to participate in social actions (e.g., social and professional networking with others), which is one of the main mechanisms for building social capital. Social capital, the networks of relationships among people, is a critical part of the job-search process as people rely on these networks to find jobs (Cingano & Rosolia, 2012; Zenou, 2015). Beyond finding a job, social capital can result in higher wages, better employment prospects, and overall better health (Kunze & Suppa, 2017). Unemployment as a result of job loss can also shatter one's confidence.

Within the unemployed arena, there are two broad categories: the voluntarily and involuntarily unemployed. Voluntary unemployment is when a worker is choosing not to work (e.g., due to not

wanting to accept a lower wage, wanting to stay home with children). Involuntary unemployment is when a person is willing to work, yet he or she is not unable to find employment.

Underemployment is also associated with poor psychological health and negative affect (Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Thompson, 2014) and has been linked to lower job satisfaction, lower job retention, and greater work stress (Benedict, Gayatridevi, & Velayudhan, 2009; Lobene, Meade, & Pond, 2015; Lobene & Meade, 2013; Maynard et al., 2015). Individuals are considered underemployed if (1) an individual has more education than the job requires; (2) an individual is involuntarily employed outside of his or her field; (3) an individual has higher skills and experience than is required for the job; (4) a person is involuntarily employed part time, temporarily, or intermittently; and (5) an individual is earning less income than typical for the job. Underemployment can be difficult to measure, and, in some cases, a worker may not even be aware that his or her job would be considered underemployed. Note, types of underemployment (e.g., discouraged workers) are difficult to measure as the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics only includes those statistics of individuals who have looked for a job within the past 4 weeks.

Factors Affecting Employment

General employability. Employability is generally a characteristic of an individual. Individual employability includes an adaptable set of competencies and qualities required to gain and maintain employment bound within the context of the labor market (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005).

Risk for underemployment. Those individuals at risk for underemployment include young or older workers, women, those who have low educational attainment, racial and ethnic minorities, and those with disabilities (Das-Munshi et al., 2012; Golden, 2015; Konrad et al,, 2013; Slack & Jensen, 2011). For example, older workers are more likely to be underemployed due to over qualification as they may take jobs late in their career to aid in their transition to retirement (i.e., bridge employment; Virick, 2011). One study also found that women may also be an underemployed group in the part-time work category as women may want flexibility for family priorities (Weststar, 2011).

Military Spouse Employment Statistics

A military spouse is defined outside of the confines of federal entities as a current or former partner of a Service member and whose career has been impacted by the Service member's commitment to the United States (Hiring Our Heroes, 2017). The Office of People Analytics (OPA) 2017 Survey of Active Duty Spouses (ADSS) is a primary source of the employment statistics used below. Another survey conducted in 2017 was from the Blue Star Families in partnership with the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF). While both surveys address military employment experiences, due to the weighting, and that the Blue Star Families survey used a convenience sample, while the ADSS used a random sample, the ADSS is more generalizable to the active duty military spouse population (Defense, Research, Surveys, and Statistics Center, 2016). Hiring Our Heroes (HOH), while working with Public Opinion Strategies, also conducted a survey of active duty and recent veteran military spouses in 2017. This survey focused on the challenges of unemployment and underemployment on military recruitment and retention. While 2018 demographic data are available from the DoD, 2017 data are cited below to provide context for the results from the spouse-specific 2017 surveys cited.

Military Spouse Demographics
- o 92% of military spouses were female, and 93% of Army spouses were female (DoD, 2017).
- o Half (50%) of military spouses were 30 years of age or older, and the average age was 31.5 years old. The average age of Army spouses was also 31.5 years old (DoD, 2017).
- o 41% of military spouses had dependent children. Over 70% of those children were 11 years old or younger (HOH, 2020).

Military Spouse Education
- o Military spouses were more highly educated than most working Americans; 88% of military spouses had post-high school education, 34% had a college degree, and 15% had a postgraduate degree (HOH, 2017).

Employment
- o 61% of military spouses were in the labor force, and 47% were employed, 14% were unemployed and 39% were not in the labor force (i.e., not working or looking for a job) (OPA, 2017).
- o 32% of military spouses were employed part time, and, of them, 14% could only find part-time work (OPA, 2017).
- o 56% of military spouses and 54% of Army spouses were employed within the area of their education or training (OPA, 2017).
- o Female spouses of active duty Service members, on average, generated 37% less income than civilian spouses; despite a higher level of education than similar full-time civilian workers, military spouses earned less (HOH, 2017; Council of Economic Advisors, 2018).

Unemployment
- o 24% of military spouses were unemployed (OPA, 2017). This is 7.5x higher than the current rate for all adult women (3.2%) (Hiring our Heroes, 2020; Bureau of Labor Statistics, February, 2020).
- o Unemployed military spouses had been looking for work for an average of 17 weeks (OPA, 2017).
- o Army spouses experienced among the highest unemployment rate of all the Services at 28%, followed by spouses who fit in the following categories: Service member is E1-E4 paygrade (29%), minority (31%), permanent change of station (PCS) in past 12 months (40%), have children (27%), and have some college/vocational diploma (27%). (OPA, 2017).

Underemployment
- o Of the employed spouses surveyed, 14% were working part time, but about 7% would prefer a full-time position (HOH, 2017).
- o 18% of employed spouses surveyed had a seasonal or temporary job, and 82% of them would prefer a full-time position (HOH, 2017).
- o 25% of employed spouses are working more than one job (HOH, 2017).
- o Approximately 70% of employed spouses do not believe that their education or past work experience is being fully utilized in their current job (HOH, 2017).
- o Nearly two-thirds (63%) of employed military spouses indicated that they had held previous positions that required greater skills or responsibilities (HOH, 2017).

- 55% of military spouses reported being underemployed; 41% were currently earning less than half of their previous salary (Blue Star Families, 2017).

Retention
- 60% of military spouses and 60% of Army spouses are satisfied with the military way of life (OPA, 2017).
- 61% of military spouses and 61% of Army spouses favored their Service member spouse staying in the military (OPA, 2017).

Employment Status Related to PCS Move
- 79% of military spouses experienced a PCS move during their Service member spouses' active duty career; 30% of those reported it taking 10 months or more to find employment after the last PCS move - 40% took 4 to 10 months, and 41% took 1 to 4 months to find employment (OPA, 2017).
- Among military spouses who had moved, 67% said they had to quit a job; only 9% were accommodated by their current employer (23% were not employed) (HOH, 2017).
- Military spouses reported that the greatest challenge in seeking employment as a military spouse is companies not wanting to hire someone who may be moved (HOH, 2017).
- Almost half (49%) of military spouses who had relocated had less than 3 months to prepare for and execute their most recent move; 11% had less than a month's notice (HOH, 2017).

Impact of Military and Family Factors on Spouse Unemployment using Logistic Regression Analysis
- Spouses who had experienced a PCS move, had their Service member return from deployment 5 or more years ago, and/or had children had higher odds of being unemployed than those who had not experienced these factors (OPA, 2017).

Financial Well-Being
- 44% of military spouses stated that they are living paycheck to paycheck or are struggling financially (HOH, 2017).

Risk Factors Related to Military Spouse Employment

Research demonstrates that networking is critical for finding jobs. However, due to the mobility of the military lifestyle, military families may not be ideally situated to have the critical networks to find jobs in new locations. The ERP was designed to help fill this crucial networking function in the absence of an existing social/professional network. A mixed-methods study by RAND (2018) on Enhancing Family Stability during a PCS found that military spouses do not achieve their desired job outcomes.

In another study, Burk and Miller (2017) estimated a causal relationship between PCS moves and employment using longitudinal administrative military personnel data merged with social security administration form 23 wage earnings for the period of 2001-2012. Findings indicated that PCS moves caused an average loss in spousal earnings of 14% or about $3,100 in the calendar year

of the move for working spouses. PCS moves also increased the likelihood that a working spouse had no earnings in the calendar year of the move. Also, older[1] spouses, spouses with young children, and male spouses experienced larger wage earnings losses, on average, as a result of PCS moves. The Institute for Veterans and Military Families Employment Research Series states that active duty military spouses are more likely (79%) to have children at home when compared to their civilian counterparts (59%). In fact, having young children, especially when a Service member is deployed, is associated with decreased earnings and a higher likelihood of unemployment (Bradbard, Maury & Armstrong, 2016). Further, loss of spousal earnings was persistent with significant differences remaining for up to 2 years after the PCS move.

Maury and Stone (2014) found evidence that military spouses have greater career mismatch among service industry-related jobs. Spouses were asked to identify if a career field for their current or most recent job was their preferred field. Retail customer service, hospitality, child care, and administrative services were identified as the lowest preferred fields for military spouses. Healthcare, education, and government work were identified as the highest preferred fields of work for military spouses. Nonetheless, some spouses may be choosing to work in other fields than those preferred, for other reasons (i.e., voluntary underemployment). The study results suggested that frequent PCS moves dictate that spouses may need to accept low-skilled work as the only work available irrespective of their preferences.

Several studies report that military spouses believe their affiliation with the military makes it more difficult to find employment (Castaneda & Harrell, 2008; Harrell et al., 2004; Maury & Stone, 2014; U.S. Chamber of commerce, 2017). Maury and Stone (2014) found that 59% of military spouses said they do not tell potential employers that they are military spouses because they believe this fact would make employers less likely to hire them. The Blue Star Families Survey (2017) similarly found that military spouses believe that being a military spouse had a negative impact on their career. Nevertheless, a study by RAND (2017) concludes that there is no objective evidence to support or refute this perception from the employer's viewpoint, and more research is needed to investigate the impact of such programs as the Military Spouse Employment Program (MSEP).

Comparing Military and Civilian Spouse Employment
Comparing military and civilian spouse employment can contribute to understanding differences in employment outcomes for military spouses. Studies have used a combination of administrative military personnel data and survey data in which analyses are conducted by comparing military spouses with civilian spouses while controlling for differences in demographic characteristics. Research has shown that the probability of being employed and having average earnings are both lower among military spouses relative to civilian spouses (Burke & Miller, 2017; Heaton & Krull, 2012; Hosek et al., 2002; Lim & Schulker, 2010: Lim, Golinelli, & Cho, 2007; Meadows et al., 2016). Similarly, a RAND study by Lim and Schulker (2010) found that rates of underemployment among the military spouse population are generally higher than for civilian spouses. About 38% of military spouses had relatively high levels of education for their current jobs, which is higher than the corresponding rate for civilian spouses by 6%; thus, disparity in education attainment and job mismatch could reflect employment obstacles unique to military spouses. However, it could also reflect differences in preferences for types of jobs. Moreover, Lim

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[1] The average age of spouses in the study sample was 30, thus the sample was split into a dichotomous group of spouses over age 30 and under age 30.

and Schulker (2010) found that 9% of military spouses were working part time but would prefer to work full time. In comparison only 2% of civilian spouses who were working part time wanted to be working full time.

Spouse Employment Impact on Retention

Military recruitment and retention rely, in part, on the extent to which Service members and their families are satisfied with military life. A U.S. Chamber of Commerce study (2017) reported 29% of military spouses cited frequent relocations as a very important factor affecting whether they were supportive of their spouse Service members staying in the military. A previous study conducted by RAND (Hengstebeck et al., 2016) also confirmed a statistically significant negative correlation between spouse employment concerns and stress and Service member military satisfaction and spouse satisfaction. A study of enlisted Service members deployed for Operation Desert Storm, conducted 1 year after their deployment and after controlling for rank, years of service, and spouse's expectations, indicated that the single largest predictor of intentions to leave the Service was the degree to which spouses perceived military life as compatible with family life (NASEM, 2019; Rose & Duran, 1995). More recently, a meta-analysis on family readiness indicators conducted by the Research Facilitation Lab found a small positive correlation between satisfaction with the military and spouse employment; spouses who were employed or reported that their partner's service had a positive impact on their career also reported slightly greater satisfaction with the military. Further, there was a large correlation between satisfaction with the military and commitment to the military; greater military satisfaction was associated with greater commitment (e.g., lower turnover intentions and more support to stay on active duty) (Hawkins & Nihill Briefing, 2020).

The U.S. Marine Corps Quality of Life Study in 2002 determined that the least satisfied spouses were those who were wholly dependent on the Marine Corps for their household income, and the most satisfied families were those deriving at least one-fourth of their household income from sources other than the active duty Marines' pay. This study, which asserts the tremendous importance of perceived quality of life, finds that one of the two best opportunities for improvement of spouse overall quality of life appears to be spouse job and professional development. For Marine officers' spouses without children, the job and professional development domains were the most influential aspects in their overall quality of life.

Strategies to Enhance Individual's Employment Opportunities

Programs designed to help job seekers find work often target the following individual strategies:
- **Increase self-knowledge**. Career assessments/inventories can help clients learn about themselves (Zunker & Norris, 1998; Clemens & Milsom, 2008). These assessments can be helpful to those who are searching for jobs that align with values and interests. This is especially true for Service members as the military tends to focus heavily on abilities, and Service members may not have explored other skills they may have that are necessary for other career fields. Values can help determine what is important in a career (Savikas et al., 2009). Understanding one's skills and creating a clear concept of job interests helps clarify future career moves and prepare a job seeker for marketing particular skill sets to potential employers (van Vianen, De Pater, & Preenen, 2009).

- **Identify job target.** Identifying a job target enables a job seeker to make informed decisions and keeps the seeker on track. (Saks & Ashforth, 2002).
- **Increase occupational knowledge**. As occupational knowledge expands, a job seeker is better able to apply skills in a more generalizable way (e.g., lawyers and police officers are similar because they uphold the law) (Clemens & Milsom, 2008).
- **Identifying transferable skills.** Once an individual leaves the military, their DD214 form (i.e., a military specific "resume" of their service history) can serve as a document that lists specific skills or duties obtained; however, career counselors with specific training understand how to civilianize military skills on a resume, so civilians can understand an individual's military abilities with regard to the civilian job sector (Kristensen, Hannerz, Hogh, & Borg, 2005).
- **Increase job search self-efficacy (JSSE).** An individual's level of self-efficacy can play a role in finding employment (Kanfer & Hulin, 1985). Previous research has demonstrated that higher levels of JSSE (i.e., perceived competence of one's job-search skills) can positively impact employment outcomes (Edin & Aviram, 1993, Saks & Ashforth, 2000). Researchers found that employment status and education level significantly predicted JSSE, and those who used employment assistance programs reported higher levels of JSSE even when accounting for factors that contribute to JSSE (Trougakos et al., 2007).
- **Outreach/accessibility of programs**. People may lack the skills to search for jobs or lack work experience, so increasing outreach to these populations can help increase participation in these programs. Further, programs that are available in a variety of formats and are accessible to different populations (e.g., resume builders freely available online) can help to increase the likelihood these populations are reached.
- **Networking.** Networking is the best way to tap the hidden job market (i.e., those jobs that are unadvertised to the public; Van Hoye, van Hooft, & Lievens, 2009; Kaufman, 2011). Research results indicate that 70 – 80% of jobs are found through networking, therefore, the majority of job-search time should be spent on networking (Grieri-Reed & Skaar, 2010; Kaufman, 2011; Savikas et al., 2009), and only 20% of job-search time should be spent using methods in the open job market (Kaufman, 2011; Kuhn & Mansour, 2014).
- **Increase volunteer opportunities.** Volunteering activities can increase social networks and encourage the development of weak ties (i.e., acquaintances, colleagues, and loose connections). Weak ties are beneficial in job-search activities as there is typically less overlap in networks between individuals and, thus, there is potential for gaining more information about jobs (Kunze & Suppa, 2017; Uhlendorff, 2004). Volunteering is often touted to be of special importance for the military spouse. This activity can help spouses keep skill sets current during times of unemployment. If they obtain new skills and credentials that are appropriately documented (i.e., through the volunteer management information system or VMIS), these may be listed on resumes within the federal jobs system. Further, time spent volunteering by Service members can be used for consideration toward promotions or other forms of recognition (e.g., the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal).

Strategies to Minimize the Impact of Underemployment
- **Job expectation management.** Managing one's expectations or perceptions around work can help develop an understanding of how to be successful in creating a career path that capitalizes on the flexibility of the current labor market (Maynard, 2011). The nature

of work has become more flexible over time and thinking about work in a traditional sense (i.e., a job must be full time and stable) may be unrealistic.

- **Increase coping skills.** In addition to helping individuals understand more about the labor market, there are various moderators between underemployment and well-being. Interventions that target these moderators may help minimize the possible physical and psychological impacts of underemployment. For example, interventions may want to target coping skills (e.g., emotional support) or career counseling and job-search skills in an attempt to help individuals find appropriate and meaningful work.

Effective Components for Getting a Job

In *The Veterans Metrics Initiative*, a longitudinal survey that examined post-9/11 veteran transitions over 3 years, effective components of programs were examined in relation to post-military well-being (e.g., job status). The programs that veterans nominated were broken down into their components — including what a program teaches or the information it provides (i.e., content component) and how a program conveys information or teaches skills (i.e., process component). In the employment domain, content components included interviewing, resume writing, job board/search engine, networking conference, job accommodations, career planning/exploration, translating military to civilian work, entrepreneurship, and job training and certification. Process components included reading information online, direct instruction, online tool, mentor/coach, social support/peer learning, socializing casually, and networking group.

After controlling for demographic variables, growth curve modeling was used to predict whether veterans obtained a job after they reported looking for work during a previous wave. Propensity score matching was used to compare veterans who used programs to demographically similar veterans who did not use programs. As a result of these analyses, there were several components that veterans, who were looking for jobs, reported using that they found to be effective in getting a job. Although there were six waves of data collected, components that were found to be effective in multiple waves are detailed here:
- o Reading about interviewing
- o Resume writing online
- o Resume writing with direct instruction
- o Career planning and exploration delivered through online tools
- o Job boards delivered through online tools
- o Translating military to civilian work

Components that were effective at only one wave include the following:
- o Interviewing with direct instruction or a mentor/coach
- o Resume writing using an online tool and mentor/coach
- o Career planning through reading online and direct instruction and mentor/coach
- o Entrepreneurship with a mentor coach
- o Job accommodations with direct instruction

For more information about the components and the prediction at each wave refer to the factsheet *The Veterans Metrics Initiative: Using Program Common Components for the Employment Domain to Predict Study Outcomes* in Appendix G (Perkins, Bleser & Morgan, 2020).

Review of Civilian Employment Programs

Scientific literature and the Clearinghouse Continuum of Evidence (Continuum)[2] were reviewed for existing programs that focus on employment. These searches revealed that most community-based programs that have employment as a target outcome are for selected-indicated audiences. There are 42 programs on the Continuum that have employment as a topic area. Although these programs place importance on employment, many of them are generally related to supporting recovery from substance use and creating an environment to prevent relapse or are designed to support those with physical or mental illness or poverty/lower-Socioeconomic Status (SES) or intend to help teenage/single parents achieve employment goals (i.e., risk factors that are considerably different than those most prevalent for military spouses). There was one program identified on the Continuum that is generally applicable to all unemployed individuals. This program is the JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills) program, which has promising evidence of effectiveness.

The goal of the JOBS program is to help individuals find employment opportunities and prevent symptoms of depression. The JOBS program has demonstrated impacts on job-search skills, motivation, re-employment rates, and mental health. The impetus of the program is that unemployment or job loss can result in loss of confidence to find a job and can be a time of elevated risk as unemployment can cause individual stress and economic strain. The JOBS program is a group-based intervention that teaches job-seeking skills and also addresses the emotional and psychological needs of job seekers. It focuses on the strengths of the job seeker and emphasizes building these strengths to increase the motivation of the job seeker and the subsequent use of these skills. The program realizes the importance of psychological factors in the job-search process. Specifically, it recognizes that successful outcomes require building individual motivation and confidence as the job-search process demands persistence. The job-search process can be demotivating and detrimental to self-esteem as it typically involves bouts of rejection until the right opportunity arises (Price & Vinokur, 2014).

Addressing Military Specific Employment Issues
The Army's Employment Readiness Program

The ability of spouses to obtain meaningful employment may weigh heavily on the Service member's decision to remain in the military. Note, the importance of spouse satisfaction, retention, and satisfaction with the military lifestyle is dependent upon both the Service member and spouse's satisfaction (Castaneda and Harrell, 2008). Thus, the military has taken significant actions to address spouse education and employment opportunities (Harrell et al., 2004; OPA, 2017). Programs such as the ACS ERP aim to increase educational and employment opportunities by providing job referrals, workshops/classes, resume assistance, and career counseling to military spouses, Service members, and retirees. The ultimate long-term goal of the ERP is to improve financial stability and increase military retention and readiness. The ERP is open to the broader military community; however, the main target population is junior enlisted

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[2]The Clearinghouse's Continuum of Evidence (Continuum) helps practitioners understand the evidence base of a program, and over 1,350 programs have been placed on the Continuum and are available for a wide range of audiences and include diverse topics and programs that are at different stages of prevention. To determine placement, peer-reviewed research for each program is examined by looking for several criteria – rigorous study design, positive and sustained outcomes, and an evaluation independent of the program developer. Programs are then placed as either Effective, Promising, Unclear (+0-), or Ineffective (Perkins et al., 2016).

military spouses. The ERP has also increasingly begun to assist Service members who are transitioning out of the military.

Other Military Employment Programs
The Army's ERP is also augmented by other military-affiliated programs with the primary mission to assist specific populations in finding employment. The Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP) is a required program for transitioning Service members, while Military OneSource (MOS) provides some employment resources (e.g., career coach) and serves all members of the broader military family. The DoD has multiple spouse-specific employment programs outside of the ACS ERP. The Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) program is available to all branches of Service. It provides information and interactive features to help spouses with their careers (e.g., education resources, scholarships, resume builder software). SECO also provides access to certified career counselors who can help with career counseling, reentering the workforce, and navigating licensing and certification requirements. The MSEP works to identify and create partnerships with companies who have agreed to hire military spouses and promote portable careers for spouses. MSEP also provides mentorship for new corporate partners.

Policy-level Initiatives
Because military spouse employment is thought to influence military retention, there are multiple recent policies that have been designed to help spouses mitigate some of the effects of PCS moves on their careers:

1. The FY20 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) recently expanded its re-licensure pilot program to include increased reimbursements up to a total of $1,000 per move from $500 per move, expanded coverage to all uniformed Services, and extended the program through 2024 to offset initial delays in program roll out. During this time period, the DoD is also conducting a more comprehensive assessment of the need for this program. Re-certifications are often needed for nurses, teachers, mental health professionals, doctors, and lawyers. In 2019, The Department of Labor (DoL) estimated that roughly 34% of the military spouses in the work force are employed in fields requiring a license or certification.

2. The My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) is a DoD scholarship program that offers spouses up to $4,000 in tuition assistance to help support portable careers for eligible military spouses (i.e., spouses married to active duty Service members in pay grades E1-E5, W1-W2 or O1-O2 that are able to begin and finish coursework while their Service member is on Title 10 military orders and are not in the Armed Forces themselves). These funds can be used to pay for education and training to obtain an associate degree in fields such as business, education, hospitality, healthcare, information technology, and other skilled trades.

3. Continued and enhanced support for occupational interstate compacts: Currently, there are five occupational interstate compacts for nurses, psychologists, physicians, EMS workers, and physical therapists. Military spouses can designate a "home state" for their license and use this as a privilege to practice provided by the compact to work in any other compact-member state without needing to get a new license. Ultimately, these agreements can help spouses start looking for work before a PCS move because they know their licenses will transfer immediately. A portion of the Veterans Benefits and

Transition Act of 2018 and the Civil Relief Act (SCRA), a program for military spouse business owners, now allows the business owner to claim the state of residency of their Service member regardless of the date of marriage for tax and voting purposes. Further, the FY20 NDAA amends residence laws to include businesses, so military spouses can claim the same state of residence as their Service member for any purpose. This provision prevents spouses from having to re-register their business in a new state every time they undergo a PCS move.

4. DoDI number 1400.25, Volume 315, March 2019: DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Employment of Spouses of Active Duty Military, often referred to as the Priority Placement Program (PPP), allows the spouse of an active duty member of the military, including the U.S. Coast Guard and full-time Reserve or National Guard, who relocates via a PCS as a sponsored dependent to the military sponsor's new permanent duty station, is entitled to military spouse preference (MSP) for all positions in the commuting area of the new duty station being filled under competitive procedures. MSP requires that a spouse candidate be selected before other best-qualified candidates. To be eligible for MSP on a specific PCS move, the spouse must (1) have married the military sponsor prior to the date of the military sponsor's orders authorizing a PCS, (2) meet all pre-employment criteria and be immediately appointable under the applicable recruitment procedures, and (3) meet basic qualifications and be among the best qualified for the position.

Conclusion

Employment programs like ACS ERP may help spouses to get a boost on localized employment networks; identify their job target; build their job skills; increase their self-efficacy; and, ultimately, obtain meaningful employment. A spouse's ability to obtain meaningful employment may have downstream impacts on Service member retention, financial stability, and military family readiness. ACS ERP may also be a helpful resource for transitioning Service members as they begin their search for a career after military life.

Evaluation Design

Identifying the Primary Aims

This evaluation effort was designed to assess the extent to which participation in the ERP was associated with the intended outcomes as delineated in the program logic model (see Appendix A for more detailed information on program outcomes). The primary aims of this evaluation include the following:

- o Aim 1: Examine whether ERP improves employment related outcomes among program participants (e.g., job status, job satisfaction, employment related self-efficacy skills).
- o Aim 2: Assess whether ERP improves participants' satisfaction with military life (e.g., readiness, retention, financial stability and satisfaction).
- o Aim 3: Gauge program user satisfaction with the ERP (e.g., did the user have a positive experience, what are the most used programs and services?).
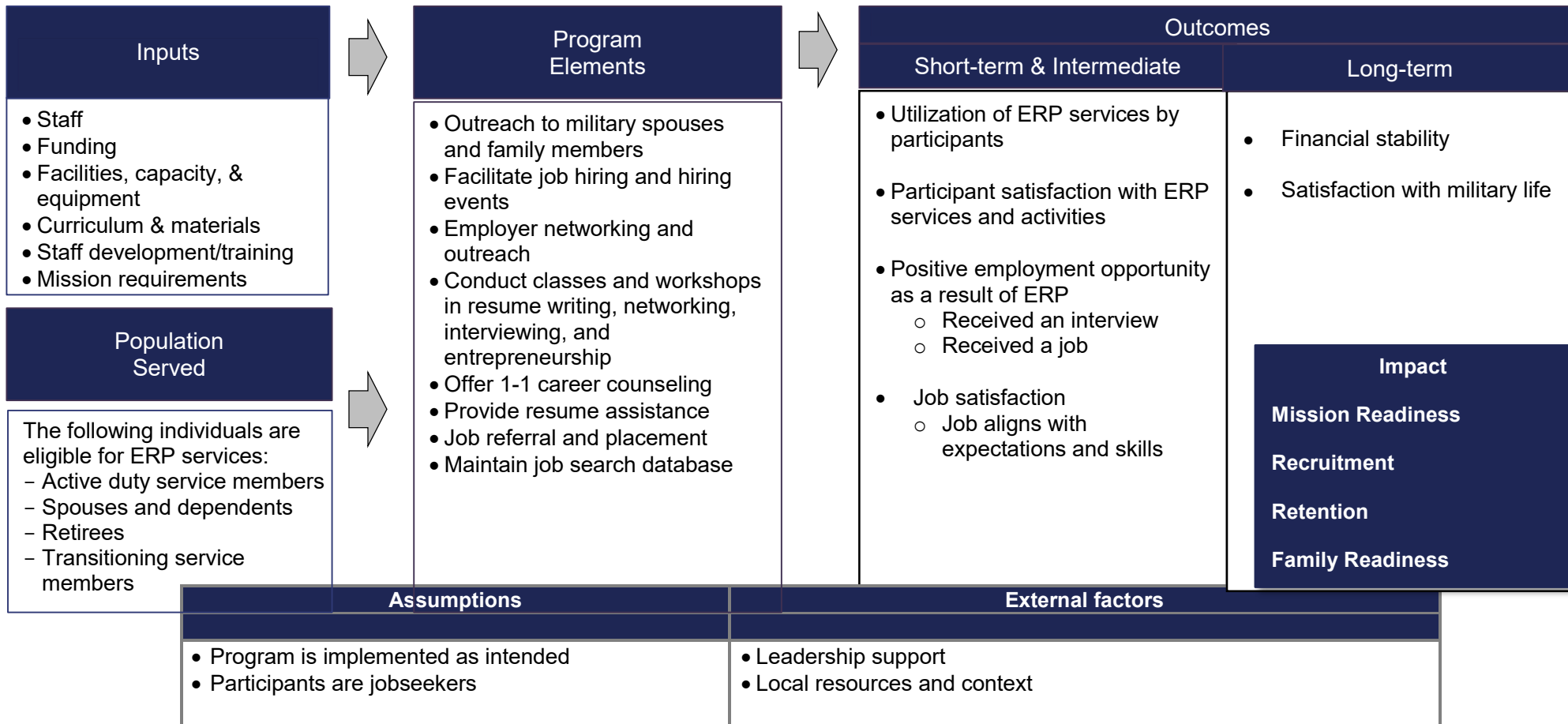
- o <u>Aim 4</u>: Examine whether ERP is more or less effective across different groups of participants (e.g. Service members, spouses, users of specific programs or services).
- o <u>Aim 5</u>: Provide targeted actionable recommendations to the Army for continuous quality improvement of the ERP.

Evaluation Logic Model

A logic model was developed for the evaluation and was based on program information data and evaluability assessment site visits in order to map activities and services provided to ERP to evaluate outcomes. This logic model is included in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Evaluation Logic Model

Employment Readiness Program (ERP) Evaluation Logic Model

Inputs		Program Elements		Outcomes		
				Short-term & Intermediate		**Long-term**

Inputs

- Staff
- Funding
- Facilities, capacity, & equipment
- Curriculum & materials
- Staff development/training
- Mission requirements

Population Served

The following individuals are eligible for ERP services:
- Active duty service members
- Spouses and dependents
- Retirees
- Transitioning service members

Program Elements

- Outreach to military spouses and family members
- Facilitate job hiring and hiring events
- Employer networking and outreach
- Conduct classes and workshops in resume writing, networking, interviewing, and entrepreneurship
- Offer 1-1 career counseling
- Provide resume assistance
- Job referral and placement
- Maintain job search database

Outcomes

Short-term & Intermediate

- Utilization of ERP services by participants
- Participant satisfaction with ERP services and activities
- Positive employment opportunity as a result of ERP
  - Received an interview
  - Received a job
- Job satisfaction
  - Job aligns with expectations and skills

Long-term

- Financial stability
- Satisfaction with military life

Impact

Mission Readiness

Recruitment

Retention

Family Readiness

Assumptions	External factors
• Program is implemented as intended • Participants are jobseekers	• Leadership support • Local resources and context

Understanding Existing Program Usage and Data

The evaluation plan was informed by evaluability assessments, which included site visits with observations of the ERP, a review of ERP materials, and in-depth discussions with ERP stakeholders at the Deputy Chief of Staff, G9 and the Installation Management Command (IMCOM) and with an ERP advisory group made up of ERP PMs and installation directorates (IDs). The evaluation team reviewed Army-wide client tracking system (CTS) data summaries for the following: employment resources (e.g., employment and volunteer opportunities, educational resource opportunities, computer assisted job-search information); simple information contacts, extended contacts, service material contacts (e.g., client contacts, client follow-ups, client referrals, employer contacts); education, training, and briefings tracked by user demographics (e.g., career planning, computer/software assistance, ERP briefings, job-search training, newcomer orientation); employment opportunity development (e.g., new jobs developed, jobs in job bank, employers participating, partnerships, jobs from local employers); clients assisted in preparation of forms and applications; and referrals/employed (e.g., referrals, full-time employed, part-time employed).

Identifying the Participating Garrisons

In May of 2018, 10 garrisons were selected by the ERP manager at IMCOM, and approval was obtained to require participation via a Tasker issued by the DCS, G-9, and an operational order (OPORD) was issued by IMCOM. CTS data were used to help identify garrisons that had significant program use in the 2017-2018 year, and sites were chosen to obtain variation by command (e.g., FORSCOM, TRADOC), size (i.e., small, medium, large and extra-large), and location (i.e., CONUS/OCONUS and distance to nearest metropolitan city [NMC]). See Table 1 below for details. Beginning in May of 2019, Clearinghouse evaluators provided an overview of the evaluation and data collection process to ERP Managers (ERPMs) and relevant support staff via several webinars. An evaluation implementation guide was created and distributed to the ERPMs (see Appendix F).

Table 1

Site Characteristics

Site Name	Command	Size	Program Use in 2017-18	Population of NMC	Miles to NMC	NMC Unemployment Rate
USAG Bavaria [3]	EUROPE	S	Moderate	25,900 (Widen, DE)	8	*
Fort Benning	TRAINING	L	Moderate	197,485 (Columbus, GA)	5	3.6%
Fort Carson	READINESS	L	High	465,101 (Co. Springs, CO)	6	3.1%

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[3] USAG Bavaria has four distinct locations spread throughout Germany.

Fort Drum	READINESS	L	High	25,900 (Watertown, NY)	8	5.4%
Fort Hood	READINESS	L	High	143,400 (Killeen, TX)	0	3.9%
Fort Knox	TRAINING	S	Moderate	615,366 (Louisville, KY)	25	3.9%
Fort Leavenworth	TRAINING	S	Moderate	481,420 (Kansas City, KS-MO)	30	3.5%
Fort Meade	SUSTAINMENT	L	Moderate	614,644 (Baltimore, MD)	15	3.5%
Rock Island Arsenal	SUSTAINMENT	XS	Moderate	102,612 (Davenport, IA)	4	4.0%
USAG Wiesbaden	EUROPE	M	Moderate	100,025 (Kaiserslautern, DE)	15	*

Note: The unemployment rate was calculated based upon the average between July and November of 2019.

*OCONUS unemployment rates were not calculated.

Analyses of all demographic variables found no significant differences for employment outcomes between Fort Drum, where the unemployment rate was higher, and all other garrisons — OCONUS garrisons were excluded from analysis.

Identifying the Sample

Since limited options existed for a comparison group for the evaluation and there were time constraints on data collection, two concurrent evaluation efforts were conducted: (1) a retrospective survey and (2) a prospective survey to examine outcomes that reflected a shorter time frame. The retrospective survey allowed for a lengthier timeframe given the understanding that data from previous surveys of spouse employment show that the time to find employment after a PCS move varies significantly. In fact, of the 79% of military spouses that experienced a PCS move during their Service member spouses' active duty career; 30% reported it taking 10 months or more to find employment after the last PCS move - 40% took 4 to 10 months, and 41% took 1 to 4 months to find employment (OPA, 2017).

As such, a retrospective survey was designed to examine the perceptions of ERP participants who had used the program within the past 6 months prior to the start of the evaluation period and were surveyed at only onetime point. This allowed for the examination of job status and satisfaction outcomes with a sample that had a more realistic follow-up period of time to assess job-search outcomes; however, a major limitation of this approach is that individuals are not reliable reporters of intermediary outcomes. Therefore, a prospective longitudinal survey was designed to examine the perceptions of current/recent ERP participants or those who used the program beginning at the start of the evaluation period. Prospective ERP users were invited to complete surveys at three time points: once following initial participation in the program (within 30 days), 60 days after participation, and 90 days after participation. The prospective sample provided an opportunity to look at intermediary outcomes that may occur before achieving employment, such as job-search skills self-efficacy. Prospective samples are considered more robust scientific designs as they can provide more accurate data (Euser et al., 2009). A prospective sample coupled with a longitudinal data collection strategy enabled an examination of outcomes over time. Although the longitudinal follow-up added to the robustness of the sample,

the major limitation of the prospective sample was the relatively short time frame for follow-up. The follow-up window may influence the ability of one to understand ERP program use and job outcomes. For example, the 90-day time frame may or may not be realistic for understanding how ERP use impacts employment and may not be adequate for understanding longer-term job outcomes that stem from job status (e.g., job satisfaction); thus, the retrospective survey was included. Nonetheless, metrics were chosen that ERP could incorporate into their own data collection systems and allow for program monitoring and continuous quality improvement.

Identifying the Metrics

Established measures best suited to address the project aims were used when possible. More information about scales identified from previous research is included in Table 2. This table only represents scales used in the ERP survey published in previous peer-reviewed research. However, all measures used in the ERP survey were adapted from previous surveys that examined employment outcomes including The Veterans Metrics Initiative (Vogt et al., 2018), the DMDC Active Duty Spouses Survey, RAND (Harrell, et. al, 2004) and MFRI (Trougakos et al., 2007). Demographic information was also collected (e.g., role in military, gender, education, race/ethnicity, PCS/time in location, time in job search, participation in ERP activities, participation in employment related non-ERP activities, barriers to employment, motivation to work). These items were included from other spouse surveys with employment items for comparability. The outcomes and data collection timeline for each survey are detailed in Table 3. In an effort to keep the survey at a reasonable length, many of these measures were significantly shortened.

Table 2

Overview of Measures Used in the ERP Survey

Measure	Citation	# Items	Previous scale reliability	Scale reliability in Retro sample	Scale reliability in Pro sample
Job-Search Self-Efficacy	Gowan, Craft, & Zimmerman, 2000; Nunnally, 1978; Ryn & Vinokur, 1992	6	α =.80 - .87	N/A	Wave 1α = .96 Wave 2α = .93 Wave 3α = .95
Job Satisfaction (Person-Job Fit Scale)	Saks & Ashforth, 2002	4	α = .86-.87	α = .87	Wave 1α = .87 Wave 2α = .92 Wave 3α = .77
Job-Search Behavior (Networking Behavior)	Adapted from Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000; Blau, 1994	6	α = .71 (9-items)	N/A	Wave 1α = .81 Wave 2α = .88 Wave 3α = .91

Table 3
Outcomes and Data Collection Timeline

Outcome	Retrospective W-1 (Pre-180)	Prospective W1 (Baseline)	Prospective W2 (Post-60)	Prospective W3 (Post-90)
Demographics	X	X	X*	X*
Satisfaction with ERP	X	X		X
Job-search skills self-efficacy		X	X	X
Networking		X	X	X
Job status	X	X	X	X
Job satisfaction	X	X	X	X
ERP participation	X	X	X	X
Other employment activity participation	X	X	X	X
Military satisfaction	X	X		X
Financial stability	X	X		X

*Limited number of questions.
Note: The outcomes were the same between the two questionnaires; however, the number of items varied between the two samples and between each wave of the prospective survey.

Program Challenges
Army Downsizing Trends
As a precursor to determine which ACS programs were ready to evaluate, the Clearinghouse conducted evaluability assessment site visits in 2016. On these site visits, a looming issue noted was the assistance that the ERP was needing to provide to transitioning Service members and retirees. This expansion of audiences was due to the perceived inability of The Soldier For Life - Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP), a program administered by the Human Resources Directorate to handle the capacity of the large number of transitioning Service members (White, Butler & Perkins, 2016). Thus, the ERP was often tasked with filling in the gaps created for those in need of employment services. This change may have impacted the availability of classes targeted to Military spouses - the program's target population. As of 2016, depending upon the needs and size of the garrison, ERP PMs may have already been double or triple hatted. The Army's downsizing trend continued into the current evaluation period of 2018-2020 as many ERPs had already begun to experience significant budget cuts. At three (TRADOC sites) of the 10 evaluation sites, the program had been nearly eliminated. This made data collection challenging

and forced the remaining ERP staff to manage other ACS priorities and provide very limited services (i.e. information and referral services) as compared to the expanded services previously offered and detailed above. Further, by the time that site visits were conducted, one participating garrison had a significant leadership change that impacted the ERP and several other ACS programs (see Fort Drum interviews under Site Visits).

Client Tracking System (CTS) Limitations

In theory, finding employment as a result of using the ERP would seem to be an easily measurable outcome; however, methods of tracking and reporting this key outcome in CTS are lacking. As one ERP PM noted during the 2016 site visits "Other than knocking on doors, I'm not sure how else the ERP could make sure that they are able to accurately report numbers." Due to the widespread limitations of the CTS database for capturing outcomes, many ERP PMs resort to maintaining their own independent databases and record-keeping methods. Email listservs are a popular way for the ERP to stay in touch with their past participants (e.g., clients voluntarily enroll after taking classes or receiving career counseling). PMs may send out a request to the listserv every 2 weeks asking: "Has anyone gotten hired in the last 10 days?" Of course, client response is voluntary, but the ERP PMs estimated, during the site visits, that 40 to 60% of their clients respond when they find jobs.

The issue of accurately tracking jobs is also difficult. A client may report having found employment but consider himself or herself underemployed and not likely to stay with the job, may have found a temporary job, or may have left a job after reporting that he or she found employment. Thus, while CTS does have a line item for job placements to be recorded by the PM and totaled each month, the entries are probably inaccurate. For instance, one PM noted during a site visit that because he has no confidence in the data, he does not report anything for this metric. Given the major flaws of the CTS data on employment, the evaluation team did not pursue use of it other than to help identify garrisons where programs and services are in high use to help select the most pertinent garrisons to participate in the evaluation.

Covid-19

Final data collections for the evaluation (e.g., site visits) were completed just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the unprecedented stressors to world-wide employment, the data collected in this evaluation may no longer be representative of employment program needs in an ongoing pandemic as per the case at the time of publication of this report.

Methods

Approvals

The Pennsylvania State University Institutional Review Board determined that the evaluation was not considered human subjects research in February of 2019. Approval from the Army Human Research Office (AHRPO) was granted in April of 2019, and the Army Research institute (ARI) permission was granted in June of 2019 (survey control number: DAPE-ARI-AO-10-54). These permissions allowed the team to begin the data-collection process.

Participant Recruitment

ERP staff at the selected garrisons were asked to invite former (retrospective) and new/current (prospective) program users via an email invitation to participate in the data collection. Army Service members[4], Army Guard and Reserve members, and spouses were eligible to participate, along with Army retirees, Army retiree spouses, and Army surviving spouses. Non-Army Service members, non-Army DoD civilians, and spouses of DoD civilians were not eligible to participate in this questionnaire. Interested participants could then enroll via a web link provided in the email invitation and access the questionnaire online. This method ensured that the ERP PMs were the first point of contact for participants in the recruitment process rather than an unknown entity (i.e., the Clearinghouse) to improve the likelihood of participation. Further, this process allowed the ERP to keep personal contact information discreet until the respondent chose to opt in to the data collection.

Data-collection efforts began in July 2019, and enrollment was open for 60 days for both participant groups. During this period, ERP staff were asked to send three reminder emails inviting program users to participate in the survey. The ERP staff were asked to track the date the emails were sent, the number of emails that were sent, and the subsequent number of rejected emails (i.e., the bounce-backs) and report to the Clearinghouse after each batch of invitations or reminder invitations were sent, so the Clearinghouse could ascertain response rates. Once the participant enrolled by accessing the web link to the survey in the email invitation, he or she was prompted to provide his or her email address. The Clearinghouse could, then, digitally send him or her the incentive, and, for the prospective group, also invite these respondents to complete future surveys. At this point, the ERP staff were no longer tasked with any recruitment activities.

The Clearinghouse sent the remainder of the invitations for the prospective follow-up surveys at 30 and 90 days, based upon the date that the participant completed the initial survey. For the prospective respondents, reminder invitations were sent at 1, 2, and 3 weeks after the initial questionnaire was completed online; thus, depending upon the responses at each reminder point, in some cases, it took respondents up to 6 weeks longer to complete each survey. Further, not all prospective sample respondents completed all three surveys; some completed just one, and others completed two of the three surveys; thus, incomplete data were not excluded from the analysis (see Table 4). In addition, all survey participants were asked for their willingness to be selected to participate in a telephonic informational interview upon completion of the online questionnaire (see Telephonic Interviews). The recruitment materials used are included in Appendix C.

Incentives

The Clearinghouse emailed participants a $20 Amazon gift card for completion of each questionnaire. Participants who were selected and completed the telephonic interview received an additional $20 Amazon gift card. In sum, a prospective participant who completed all three online questionnaires and a telephone interview would receive $80 in Amazon gift cards over the duration of the data-collection period. Alternatively, a retrospective participant could receive a maximum of $40 by participating in one questionnaire and one telephone interview. Only a portion

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[4] Pursuant to DoDI 3216.02, 2020

of those who indicated their willingness to participate in a telephone interview were selected (see Telephonic Interviews).

Data Collection Challenges and Limitations

There were more pros than cons to having ERP staff send the initial invitation emails; however, most staff were already pressed for time and did not always send the invitation emails or reminders as promptly as instructed. Errors were also noted in the number of emails sent each week, and the number of bounce-backs that were recorded. Corrections were requested, and the Clearinghouse evaluation team was confident that the response rates in this report were accurate.

Although all of the garrisons selected to participate were identified as having at least moderate program usage via review of CTS data, in the months leading up to the commencement of the data-collection period, the three TRADOC garrisons of Fort Benning, Fort Knox and Fort Leavenworth were informed of large budget cuts to the ERP, and, subsequently, recruitment efforts needed to be modified to mitigate a lack of available staff. The ID for the TRADOC garrisons assisted with the process and sent email invitations to the identified retrospective participants; however, at these three sites, invitations for the prospective participants were not able to be sent as there were only referral services being offered at these locations. The evaluation team determined that the potential prospective program users at these sites would make a valuable comparison group (i.e., those receiving the full array of ERP services at the other seven sites, as compared to those receiving only information and referral services at the three TRADOC sites). As such, potential ERP participants who received only limited referral services were invited to participate in the questionnaire using a slightly modified form to account for the limited services available to them. Nonetheless, only a few participants who completed the questionnaire met the criteria of being stationed at one of the TRADOC garrisons that were impacted and requesting limited services from the ERP. Therefore, no meaningful comparisons could be made.

Because the ERP staff were not aware of who had or had not already enrolled and completed the initial questionnaire, when reminder emails were sent, they were sent to the entire sample, and a note to disregard the reminder if the participant had already enrolled was included. To ensure there were as few technological barriers as possible for participants to complete the online questionnaires, the survey was designed such that users were able to access and complete the (same) survey more than one time. The Clearinghouse team was able to identify multiple responses from the same users in most cases by reviewing the data for duplicate emails; however, some users completed the survey using different email addresses as identified by IP addresses or other demographic characteristics. In cases where there were multiple submissions, the Clearinghouse team kept the first submission (identified by the date and time stamp) as subsequent submissions are considered biased by having previously viewed the questions. Partial responses, or those with completion rates below 30%, were also removed from the data (n=5 in the retrospective; n=1 in the prospective).

A number of questions had open-ended responses or "Other" options. When possible, other responses that matched one of the original response options were recoded into that option, or coding decisions were made on how to treat consistent responses. For example, in response to

employment status, if a participant wrote in "not currently working, full time student," this response was recoded as "Not currently working or looking for work."

Furthermore, not all ERP participants were asked all questions. To ensure that respondents did not need to view questions that were not relevant to them, based upon their prior answers, skip logic was used throughout the survey (e.g., spouses were not asked questions that were relevant only to Service members, or those who had obtained a job were not asked questions about their current job search). In addition, participants were allowed to skip any question they did not wish to answer except for the participant screener questions. The initial screener questions varied slightly by survey type but included whether they used the ERP, military affiliation, and garrison. If participant responses to these questions met the criteria to participate, they were then asked to provide their email addresses for incentive delivery and future communications. For most questions presented in this report, the sample size is provided. However, in cases where data were missing or a sample size was too small, there are instances (e.g., aggregated scales) where information is summarized across questions, but the individual question response rate varies. In these scenarios, the sample size for the question is often presented in the narrative summary of the findings but not in the table presenting aggregate findings across the questions (e.g., see Prospective Survey: Job Satisfaction).

All percentages provided in this report were rounded to the nearest whole number for clarity and readability. Therefore, there may be instances where numbers do not add precisely. Decimals presented for means, standard deviations, and coefficient reporting are rounded to the 10th decimal place. Probability values (p-values) are reported in accordance with American Psychological Association (6th edition) standards.

Retrospective Participant Data Collection Results

Data Collection Timeline
Data collection started July 2019. However, some garrisons had to start recruitment later than this date. Therefore, to ensure that all garrisons had adequate time to send initial email invitations and three reminder invitations, the recruitment period for the retrospective group stayed open for 60 days (July 8 – September 8, 2019).

Overall Response Rate
Response rate details are summarized, below, in Table 4.

Table 4

Overall Survey Response Rate

Sample Size	Responses Submitted Online	Complete Responses	Duplicate Respondents*	Ineligibles**	Revised Total	% Response
915	292	285	18	45	222	24%

*As detailed on page 19, some respondents completed the survey more than one time.
** Because initial recruitment was managed by the ERP PMs, the Clearinghouse could not confirm that all ERP participants who received the survey link were eligible to complete the survey; thus, if a participant began a survey but based upon his or her answers to the screener questions was deemed not eligible to complete the survey, (e.g., non-Army DoD employee or spouse of a DoD employee) he or she was reported as ineligible.

Retrospective Respondent Characteristics

Of the 915 program participants invited, a sample of 222 eligible prior ERP users participated in the retrospective study (24% response rate). The majority of the participants in the survey were spouses (61%; n=136), enlisted (68.5%; n=152), female (71.6%; n=159), and had post-high school training (83%; n=184). The mean age for ERP retrospective participants was 35.8 years. ERP participants had been in the military or part of a military family about 10.9 years on average and had relocated 3.6 times. Respondents were at different stages in the PCS cycle. Thirty-five percent (n=61) were transitioning within the next 12 months, 24% (n=42) anticipated transitioning in between 1 and 2 years, 29% (n=51) anticipated transitioning in over 2 years from now, and 12% (n=21) indicated "Other." Example of "Other" responses included expiration term of service, final duty station, retirement, and unknown. See Table 5 for all participant characteristics.

In comparison to OPA 2017 data for military spouses, the ERP evaluation retrospective sample was slightly older (ADSS; 31.5 years old), less likely to be female (ADSS; 93% female for Army spouses), and more educated (59% had a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 40% of spouses in the ADSS). Note, the ADSS was a reasonable, albeit imperfect, comparison. The evaluation retrospective sample is more diverse than ADSS because it was not limited to active duty spouses. In addition, the retrospective sample was focused on those who participated in an employment program; thus, respondents were much more likely to be looking for work.

Table 5

Retrospective Respondent Characteristics (n=222)

	Percent/Mean (SD)
Spouses	
Active duty spouse	54.1%
Spouse of retired military	4.1%
Reserve spouse	1.4%
Surviving spouses	1.4%
Guard spouse	.5%
Service members	
Active duty Soldier	24.8%
Retired military	5%
Reserve member	.5%
Guard member	.5%
Army DoD employee	8.1%
Paygrade	
E1-E4	19.4%
E5-E9	49.1%
W1-W4	8.6%
O1-O3	8.2%
O4-O6	6.4%
Race	
White	64.9%
Black or African American	25.2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3.6%
Asian	8.1%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	.5%
Non-Hispanic	81%
Female	71.6%
Age	35.8 (9.3)
Highest Level of Education	
Some high school or less	.5%
Completed HS/GED	15.3%
Some college	9%
Associate's degree	14.9%
Bachelor's degree	38.3%
Graduate or professional school	20.7%
Length of time as military family	10.9 (7.7)
Number of relocations	3.6 (2.8)

Note. SD = Standard Deviation. The response options for the demographic question on "Race" were "select all that apply." Samples sizes vary by question.

Garrison Response Rate

There was participation from each of the garrisons selected for the evaluation. Fort Drum had the highest participation and accounted for almost half of the retrospective sample (n=101; 46%). There were also a number of "Other" garrison responses. The "Other" responses include those who had had a PCS since participating in the ERP and those who were using nearby garrison resources in a military community with multiple installations.

Figure 2
Garrison Response Rate (n=222)

Garrison Response Rate
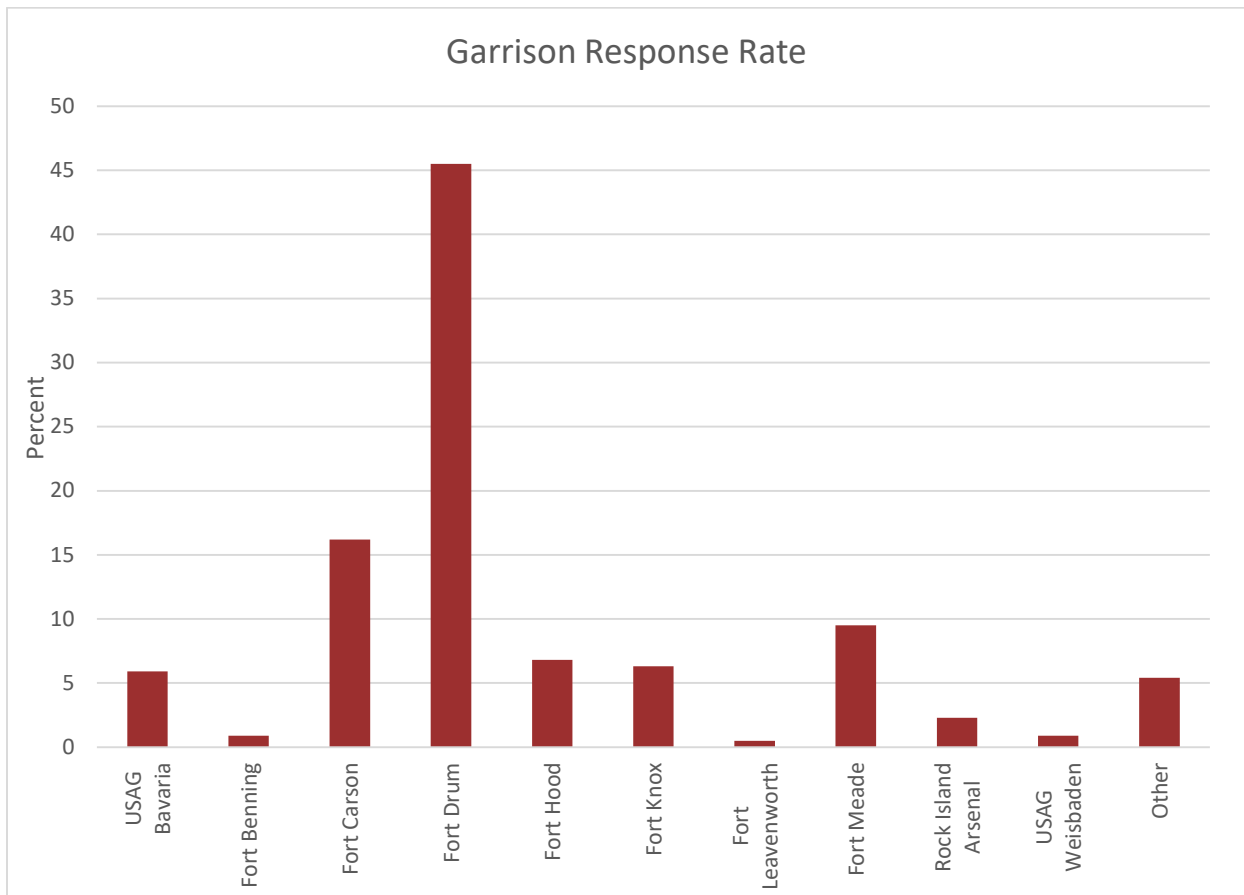
Takeaway
The total number of the participants was 222. Fort Drum and Fort Carson had the highest amounts of participation. Low participation rates from the three TRADOC garrisons (i.e., Fort Benning, Fort Knox, and Fort Leavenworth) were anticipated due to budget and staffing cuts during the data-collection time frame.

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Primary Reason for Working

Figure 3 below details ERP retrospective respondents' primary reasons for working. Half (50%; n=106) of the participants listed their primary reason for working was to pay bills and basic expenses. The second and third top reasons for working included personal fulfillment (19%; n=41) and long-term savings (11%; n=24).

Figure 3

Primary Reason for Working (n=211)
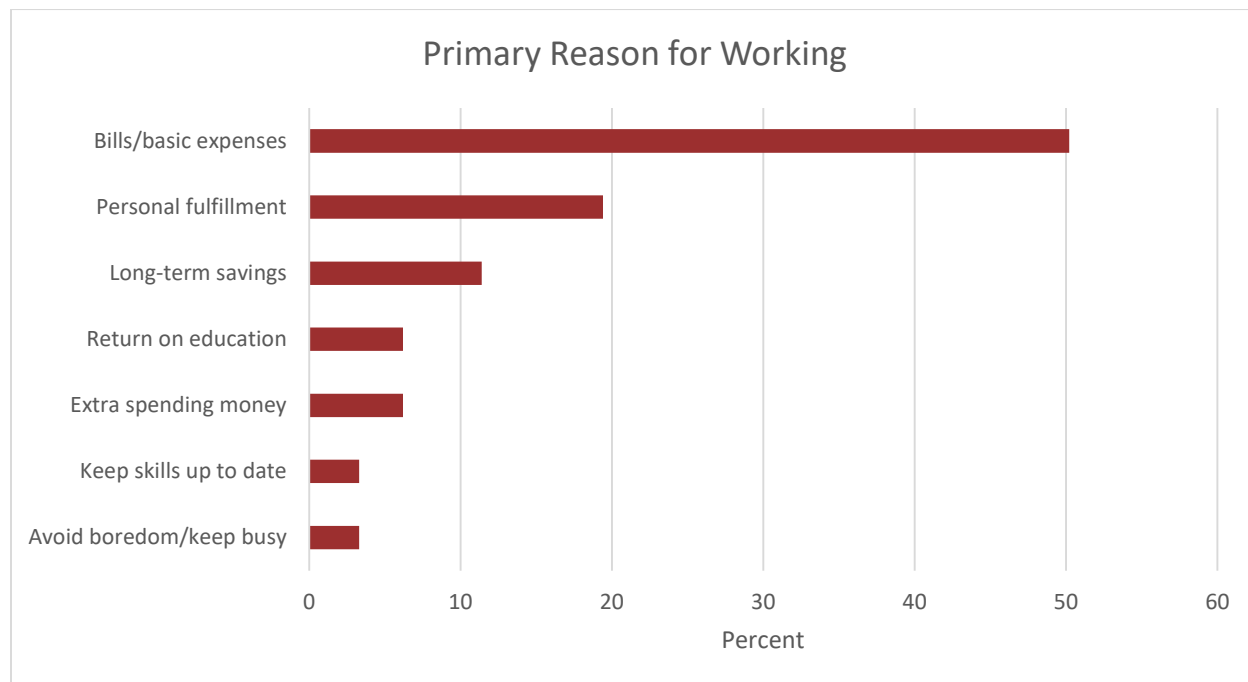
Takeaway
Paying bills and basic expenses was the primary reason for working as reported by a majority of the participants in the retrospective sample. Thus, employment was perceived to be essential to the participants' family's financial well-being.

Primary Reason for Using the ERP

The majority of respondents (65%; n=144) were using the ERP for the first time and had only used the ERP at their present duty station (n=139; 63%). However, more than a third of respondents (37%; n=83) had used the ERP in at least one other duty station. Retrospective participants noted two primary reasons for using the ERP: (1) currently looking for a job (29%; n=63) or (2) looking for a different job even though they are now employed (30%; n=64). Other reasons for using the ERP are presented in Figure 4. In addition, there was an open-ended "Other" response option. Some of these responses included looking at options after retirement,

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immigrating, going to graduate school, understanding career transition options, or was looking for a job and decided not to go back to work.

The majority (87%; n=77) of those who found a job reported that their job search took under a year. Thirty-eight percent (n=34) reported their job search took less than 3 months, 32% (n=28) reported 4-6 months, 17% (n=15) reported 7-12 months, 8% (n=7) reported 1-2 years, and 6% (n=5) reported 2 or more years.

Figure 4
Primary Reason for Using the ERP (n=215)

Primary Reason for Using the ERP
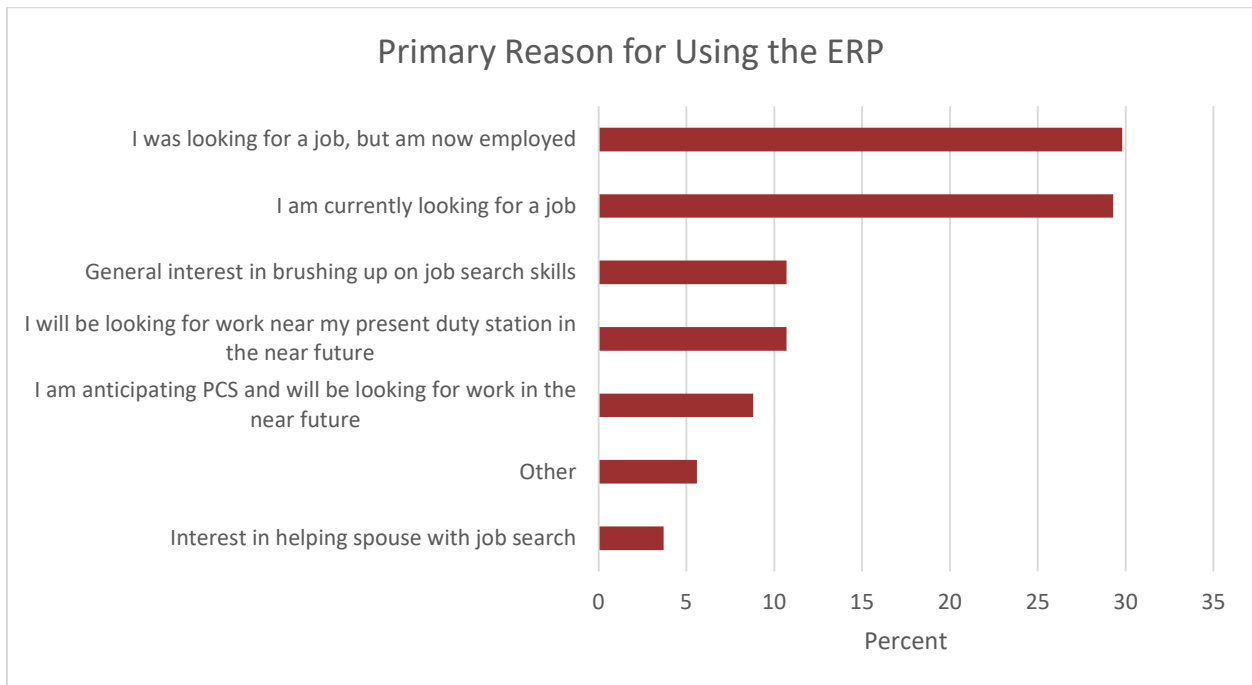
Takeaway
In the retrospective sample, participants' primary reason for using the ERP was because they were either looking for a job and, subsequently, found one, or they are still looking for a job at the time of the survey. Thus, the ERP seems to be providing needed services for the target population.

Use of ERP Services
The most common service used was "how to write a resume" (62%; n=137)[5]. Participants also frequently used ERP for "orientation on job searching skills/services" (42%; n=94), "one-on-one assistance with job search" (34%; n=75), and "job fairs" (32%; n=70). Six percent (n=14) of ERP

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[5] More detailed information about the use of Federal jobs resume writing and job search classes will be presented in the summary of data from the telephonic interviews section below.

participants also noted used "Other" ERP provided services including the computer room, German as a second language class, and information about the PPP. The number of services used varied, and many participants used more than one service. About one third (35%; n=77) of the participants reported only using one ERP service, while about two thirds (65%; n=139) reported using two or more ERP services. Many respondents also reported using other non-ERP services for their employment needs, and a little over one third (37%; n=81) reported only using ACS ERP activities and services. The most commonly used activities and services "outside" of the ERP were "how to write a resume" (25%; n=56), "job fairs" (24%; n=54), and "announcements of job openings," such as job boards and digital job posting emails (23%; n=52).

Figure 5
ERP Services by Use (n=216)

ERP Services in Order by Use

Service	
How to write a resume	~62
Orientation on job searching skills/services	~42
One-on-one assistance with job search	~34
Job fairs	~31
Announcements of job openings	~23
Help in completing job applications	~17
How to interview for a job	~15
Help deciding what kind of work to do	~10
Use of word processing equipment for preparing job…	~9
Other	~6
Job search support group	~6
Advice/class on how to dress for job interviews	~4
Referrals to temp agencies	~3

Percent

Note. ERP services are presented in the figure in order of frequency of use.

Takeaway
More than 60% of retrospective participants used the ERP's resume writing services. Telephonic interviews revealed that resume writing services were often related to resume writing for federal job applications.

Other Employment Services Used

ERP participants were asked about other non-ERP and military-affiliated employment services they may have used. More than half of ERP participants (63%; n=131) also used other employment services, and 37% (n=81) only used the ACS ERP. The top five most used employment services included "resume writing" (25%; n=56), "job fairs" (24%; n=54), "announcements of job openings" (23%; n=52), "orientation on job searching skills/services" (13%; n= 29), and "how to interview for a job" (13%; n=29). The most commonly used non-ERP services were similar to the ERP services participants used with the exception of "how to interview for a job," which was a common employment service used outside of ERP. Most of the respondents who received a telephone interview clarified that they used the Federal Jobs resume writing class. Thirty-eight percent (n=50) of ERP participants used one other non-ERP employment service, 28% (n=37) used two outside services, 14% (n=18) used three outside services, and 20% (n=26) used four or more employment services that were not a part of ERP.

More than half of ERP participants (65%; n=145) also used other military-affiliated resources to help with employment. For instance, 56% (n=78) of those who used a program nominated one military-affiliated program used for employment. Thirty-four percent (n=48) nominated using two programs, and 10% (n=14) used three or more programs. The largest program used for employment that was military-affiliated was Military OneSource (33%; n=73). Nineteen percent (n=42) of ERP participants reported using Spouse Employment and Career Opportunities (SECO), and 21% (n=47) of the participants used MSEP. Almost a quarter (24%; n=54) of the participants using ERP also reported using Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP). In comparison, 60% (n=41) of Service members reported using SFL-TAP. About 5% (n=10) also reported using other military-affiliated resources including My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA), mindfulness training, an off-post employment agency, the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC), an online search, the spousal preference program, and a toddler playgroup.

Figure 6
Other Employment Services Used (n=212)
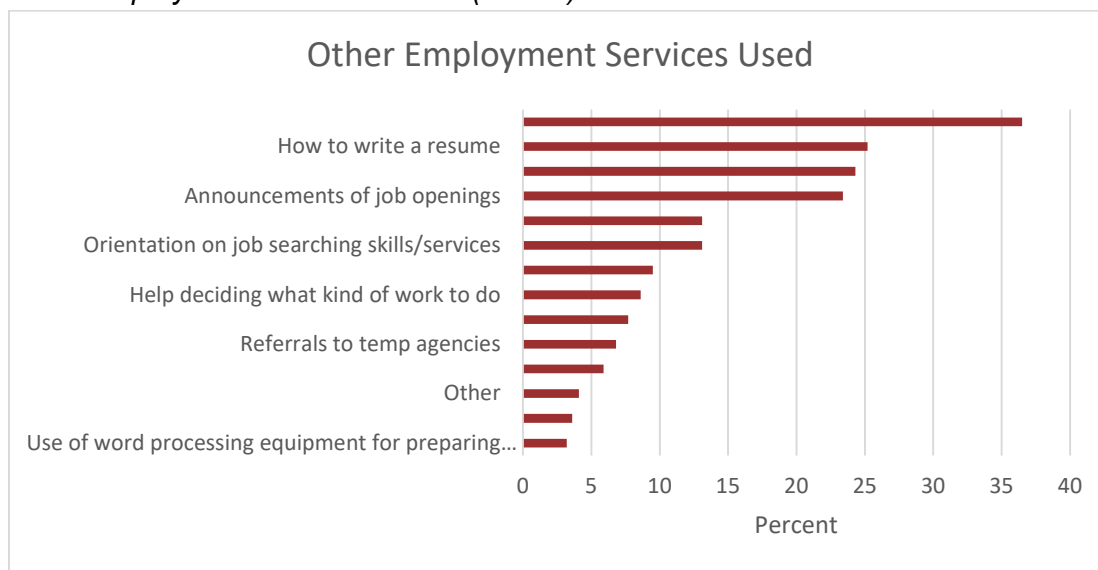
Satisfaction with ERP Services

Retrospective participants were asked about their overall satisfaction with ERP and their satisfaction with the individual services they used. For individual services, ERP participants were asked whether they were very "very dissatisfied" (1), "dissatisfied" (2), "neither satisfied or dissatisfied" (3), "satisfied" (4), and "very satisfied" (5). Response options were collapsed into three categories for ease of presentation with "very dissatisfied" and "dissatisfied" collapsed into one category ("dissatisfied"), and "satisfied" and "very satisfied" collapsed into the other category ("satisfied").

Overall, ERP retrospective participants were highly satisfied with the program and individual ERP activities and services. Indeed, 93% of the participants (n=200) reported that they would recommend ERP. Participants were also asked about their satisfaction with individual services. The response options ranged from "very dissatisfied" (1) to "very satisfied" (5). Participants reported the most satisfaction with "how to interview for a job" (94% were satisfied), and the service with the reported least satisfaction was "referrals to temp agencies" (43%). Only individuals who stated that they had used specific ERP services were asked about their satisfaction with the service.

Table 6

Satisfaction with ERP Services (n=212)

Satisfaction with…	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Mean (SD)
How to write a resume	4%	7%	81%	4.4 (.96)
Job-search orientation	6%	5%	87%	4.2 (.97)
One-on-one job search	12%	9%	72%	4.1 (1.3)
Job fairs	1%	9%	71%	4.4 (.76)
Job opening announcements	6%	12%	79%	4.2 (1.0)
Help completing job apps	3%	8%	68%	4.4 (.82)
How to interview for a job	-	3%	94%	4.5 (.56)
Deciding what kind of work to do	5%	-	91%	4.4 (.75)
Word processing equipment	11%	.5%	74%	4.2 (1.3)
Job-search support group	-	8%	77%	4.6 (.67)
Advice on dressing for job interview	10%	-	90%	4.4 (.97)
Referrals to temp agencies	-	29%	43%	4.0 (1.0)

Note. ERP services are presented in this table in order of frequency of use.

Participants were asked for open-ended feedback that described their satisfaction with the ERP. A sampling of excerpts that demonstrate the variability in satisfaction are presented below:

Highly Satisfied or Satisfied

- "All staff is very knowledgeable and helpful. They have positive attitudes and I have recommended everything I have taken to my soldiers who are looking to transition out of the military."
- "Application and Resume assistance is NECESSARY to get past the USAJobs database searches. I am more than qualified for many jobs, yet I didn't know how the system worked, so a human never saw my resume."
- "As a RN, my resume is constantly changing from instillation to instillation. With the fluidity of my career, my resume is more challenging than the next persons. I truly appreciate all of the assistance I have received on my resume: federal and civilian, my cover letter, and my reference page. Without the assistance of ACS, I would be lost and I highly recommend this service!!"
- "I appreciate the detailed weekly employment opening emails."
- "If I had not utilized the services, I would have never known that there is a difference for how to apply for government positions or even known that I was eligible for hiring and retention preferences. It is because of the ACS ERP program that I found jobs at each of my husband's duty station. They also connected me with volunteer opportunities that helped me work on professional development, that filled the gap in KSA's needed to be eligible for positions I desired."
- "They are amazing and just a few face to face sessions and I landed a full time position that challenges me and pushes me."

Mixed Satisfaction

- "Although my initial interview on how to write a resume and search USAJobs was informative, upon contacting ACS again regarding follow up questions, my emails were ignored."
- "ACS is dialed in at the post level. This is good, but has yet to yield results for me."
- "I used the program to find a job. They had a lot of jobs available, but all the positions were in the same fields. They needed a wider variety."
- "More spouses should know about this program. Being a military spouse for over 11 years, my husband never introduced me to ACS-ERP. I found it through a friend 2 years ago. Wish I knew about this 11 years ago."
- "The overall information was helpful but I wish they would help people actually find open jobs or work one on one with us on our government resumes."

Dissatisfied

- "I have my JD and the counselor kept using resume and job announcement examples for administrative assistant jobs and entry level secretarial jobs. Overall, I felt the time spent with him was frustrating and discouraging."
- "I would have been more satisfied with the one on one job search, had the individual assisting me been more helpful and specific in our conversation. Instead of helping me as I was in front of her she told me that I would need to attend the resume writing course in order to get the complete information packet."
- "Rude staffing, judgmental, and seem to hate their career."
- "Staff wasn't helpful in writing a resume at all. They told me to send in my resume once I finished it and she would make changes to it to make it sound better. But when I sent it in I never got a response back."
- "There needs to be a lot more help/emphasis on federal/general schedule (GS) employment and the required documentation for it (Federal Resume, SF-15, memos, etc.)"

> **Takeaway**
> The comments made by retrospective participants largely indicated their satisfaction with the program. However, several comments indicated that participants may not be certain which employment services were provided by the ERP. For instance, one respondent commented "The Spouse Preference program online was so convenient!" Much of the dissatisfaction with ERP was centered upon a lack of follow-up assistance, communications with ERP staff, and lack of the program's tailoring to an individual's needs.

Current Employment Status

Figure 7 below details retrospective respondents' employment status. Clearinghouse staff hypothesized that more participants in the retrospective sample would have jobs since they were past participants of the ERP. Almost half (44%; n=71) of the participants were employed full time for at least 35 hours a week. Twenty-six percent (n=42) were not currently working but were seeking work, 16% (n=27) were employed part time, and 9% (n=15) were not currently working or looking for work. Four percent (n=7) responded with "Other" in regards to employment status. Some of the open-ended responses included: student (n=3), self-employed (n=3), starting work soon (n=2), and health issues (n=1).

Figure 7

Current Employment Status (n=162)
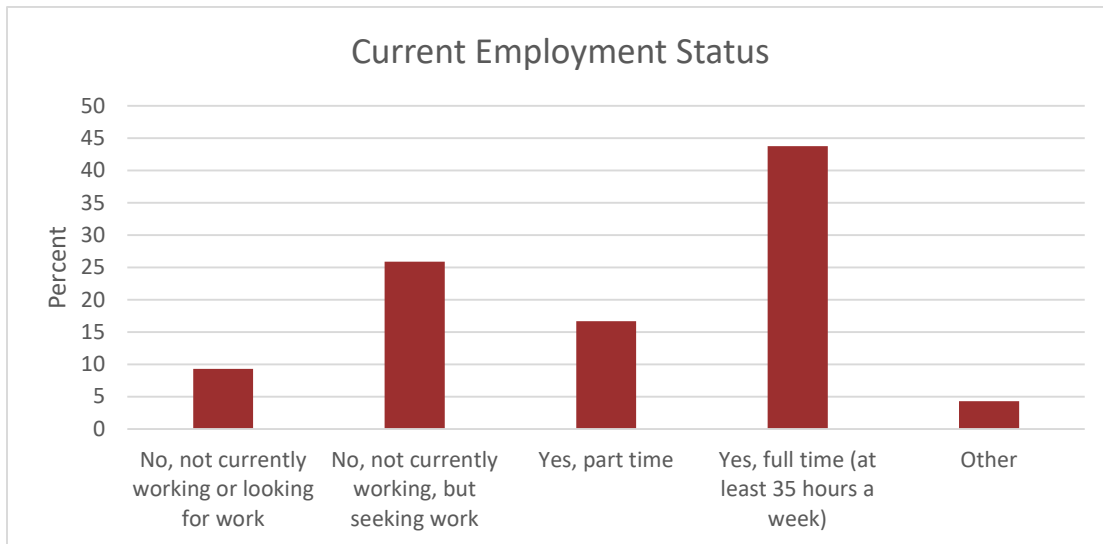
Note. Participants who selected active duty Soldier did not receive the employment status question.
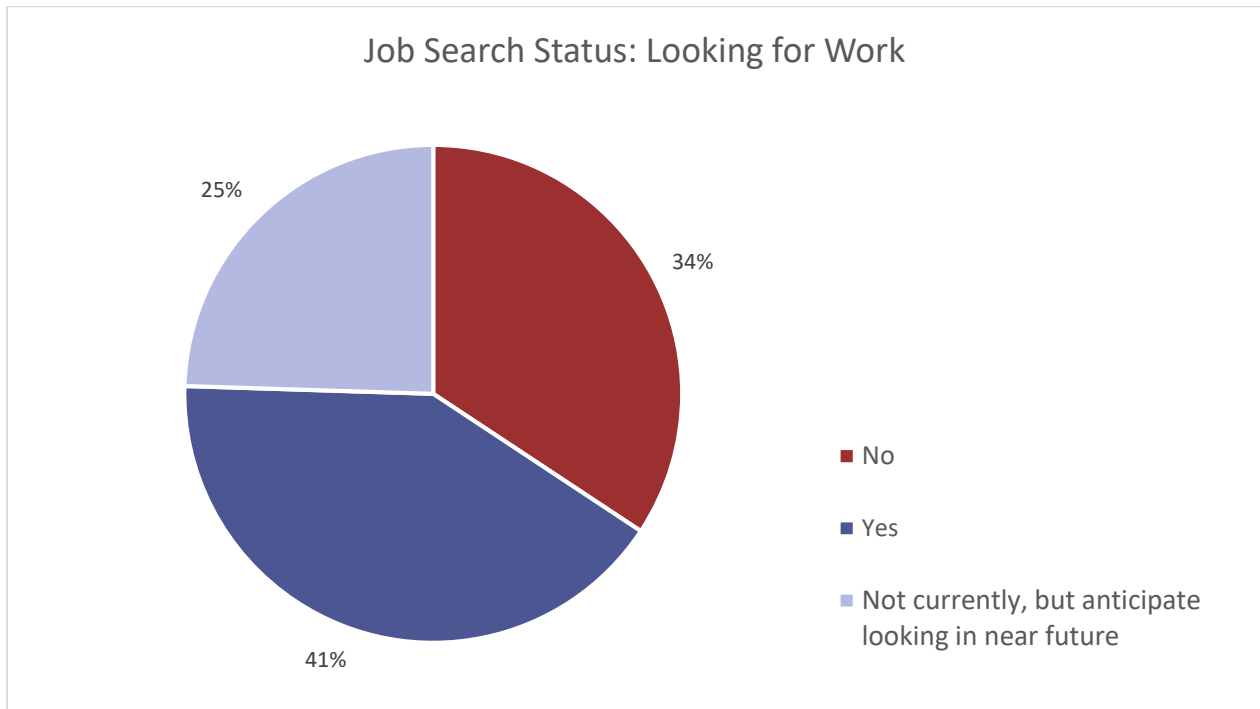

Takeaway
Almost half (44%) of the ERP retrospective participants were working full time at the time of the survey. Slightly more than a quarter (26%) of the ERP participants were still seeking work.

Job-Search Status: Looking for Work

In addition to asking about employment status, both spouses and Service members were asked whether they were currently looking for work, as Service members may be looking for work as they near transition and spouses may be employed, but looking for work because of an upcoming PCS move or dissatisfaction with a current job. Approximately 41% (n=89) were looking for work, 34% (n=74) were not looking for work, and 25% (n=53) were not currently looking for work, but they did anticipate looking for work in the near future. When comparing work seeking to current employment status 60% (n=39) of the participants were not currently working but were seeking work. Among those who were employed, 14% (n=9) of the participants were working part time and looking for work. A quarter of the participants (n=16) were employed full time yet looking for work.

Figure 8
Job-Search Status: Looking for Work (n=216)

Job Search Status: Looking for Work

25%

34%

41%

- No
- Yes
- Not currently, but anticipate looking in near future

Takeaway
The majority of the participants (59%) in the retrospective sample were not looking for work at the time of the survey. Among those who were looking for work, 28% of the participants were currently employed in either part-time or full-time positions.

Time Spent on Current Job Search

Time Spent Looking (n=82). Participants were asked about how much time they spend looking for a job in hours each week. Almost three quarters of the participants (72%; n=59) reported spending 10 hours or less each week, while 28% spent 11 hours or more each week. Half of ERP participants (n=41) spent less than 5 hours a week on their job search. Those participants who spent less than 5 hours on the job search represent the largest group still looking for work (n=17).

Length of Job Search (n=89). Those who were still currently looking for work were asked how long their job search had been. Among those who were looking for a job, 38% (n=34) of respondents noted that their current job search was taking six 6 months or less, 32% (n=28) had been looking for a job for 4-6 months, and 17% (n=15) noted their current job search was taking 7-12 months. About 5% (n=12) noted their job search was continuing for a year or more. When examining the length of the job search and variables, no differences were found between those with shorter and longer job search length. However, a difference was found, and it was related to

reason for working. Those who had been looking for a year or more selected their reason for working as personal fulfillment (n=6).

Obtained a Job Through ERP Participation

If ERP users noted they were employed, they were asked if they believed they received a job as a result of participating in ACS-ERP. The response options included "Yes," "No," "Maybe," and "Not Applicable" with an open-ended box for participants to explain their choices. Just over half (55%, n=42) of those who obtained a job stated that they believed they received that job because of their participation in the ERP. About one third (31%, n=24) of the participants stated their participation in the ERP did not impact them receiving a job, and 14% (n=11) responded with "Maybe." Note, several people were already employed and were using ERP for the following reasons: refresh or enhance job skills or stay current in job skills, prepare for the next duty station, or search for new or additional jobs. No one selected "Not Applicable" as an option; however, a few participants selected "No," and they included written responses that would indicate the "Not Applicable" response option may have been a better choice. Selected participant quotes by response option about whether participants believed ERP helped them get a job are included in Table 7.

Figure 9

Obtained a Job Through ERP Participation (n=77)
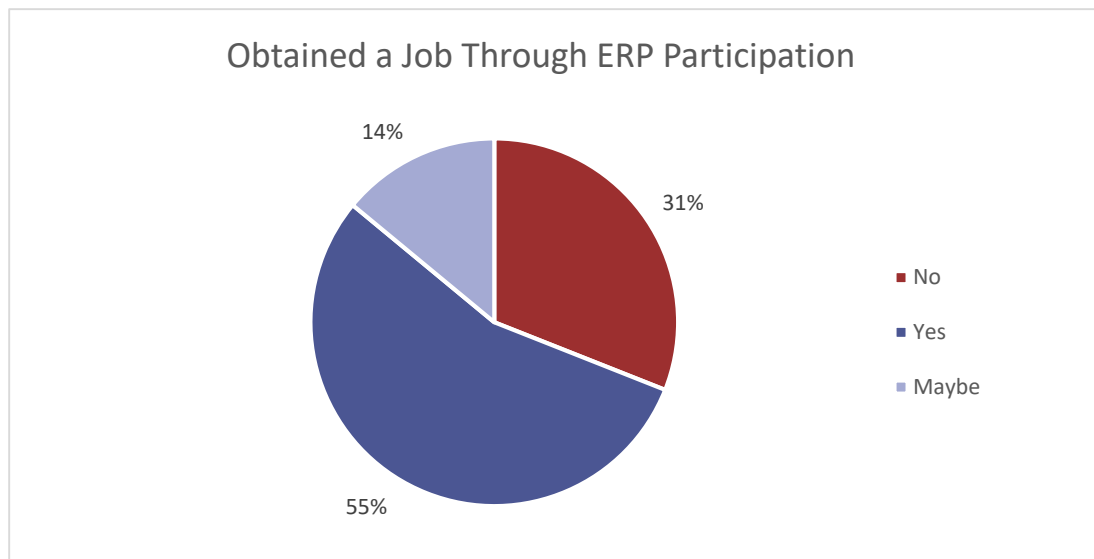
Received an Interview/s as a Result of Participation in the ERP

Respondents who indicated they were not currently employed were asked if they received an interview as a result of participation in the ERP. Almost half of the participants (49%, n=44) indicated they had received an interview since participating in ERP. Among those who received

interviews, about one third (32%, n=14) received one interview, 27% (n=12) received two interviews, and 49% (n=17) received three or more interviews.

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Takeaway
Almost half of the retrospective survey respondents who were still looking for a job at the time of the survey indicated they had received one or more interviews as a result of participation in the ERP. Repeatedly receiving job interviews but not getting job offers is an indication, at least in part, that developing interview skills services could be needed.

</div>

Table 7

Selected Quotes: Belief Obtained a Job by Participating in the ERP

Yes, Obtained a Job	Maybe Obtained a Job	No, Did Not Obtain a Job
"Absolutely. I had no resume and hadn't worked outside of the home in over 5 years. They filled me in on the job market and interview process. Okay'd my interview attire and helped me prep for my interview. The resume help was unbelievable. I was so proud of the final product"	"I saw a flyer for the work from home job fair. Unfortunately, I couldn't attend the fair but I was still able to acquire some information about some of the businesses that were there."	"Already employed at the time of seeking services. Have not been hired since having been assisted at ACS."*
"Talking with ACS-ERP helped me to focus so that I could find a good fit."	"The resumes that I had reviewed at ACS-ERP were not the resumes that I used for my applications. I did receive callbacks for federal resumes that I completed with ACS-ERP but none of those callbacks led to employment."	"I did not receive as much help as others because I had already built my resume and was looking at the jobs they suggested."
"The tools that were given to me help me update my resume and ultimately helped me find a new job in our PCS area"	"They taught me skills to help here and there but usually gained employment from something else"	"If seeking a Government position, the process is far too involved to wait on the opportunity to manifest at times."
"It helped me gain knowledge on how to prepare a resume which opened the doors for me in getting hired as a GS."		"No, I found a job through indeed.com."

*As noted above, some *No* responses may have fit better into the *N/A* response option.

Reasons for Working Part Time

To capture potential underemployment, ERP participants were asked about their reasons for working part time. Reasons were split across the response options. The most frequent responses for only working part time was because the respondent could only find part-time work (n=8; 30%), wanting to spend time with children (n=7; 26%), and other family or personal obligations (n=7; 26%).

Figure 10

Reasons for Working Part Time (n=27)
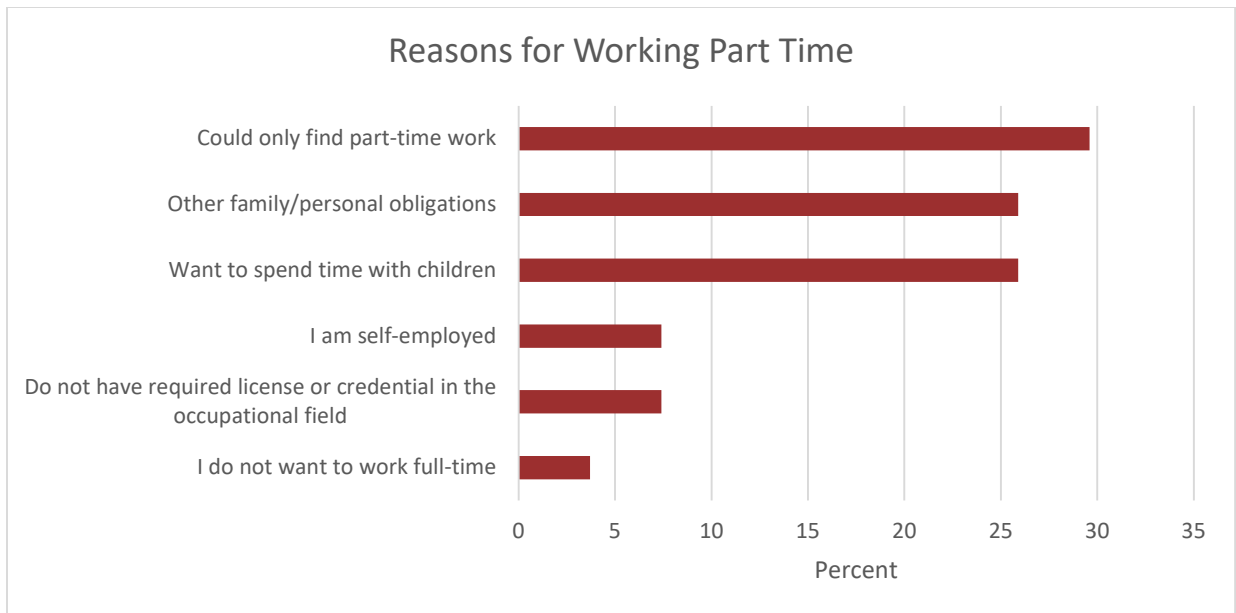
Job Satisfaction

If ERP participants were employed, they were asked a series of job satisfaction questions. The response options included "to a very little extent or not at all" (1), "to a little extent" (2), "to some extent" (3), "to a large extent" (4), and "to a very large extent" (5). Response options were

collapsed into three categories for ease of presentation with "to a very little extent or not at all" and "to a little extent" collapsed into one category ("a little extent") and "to a large extent" and "to a very large extent" collapsed into the other category ("a large extent").

The Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) 2007 study of military spouse employment indicated the following job satisfaction items were used as an indicator of underemployment. Spouses were considered underemployed if they reported that their current job only allowed them to use their knowledge, skills, or abilities to a little extent. By this metric, 6% of the retrospective sample was considered underemployed. Spouses were considered fully employed if they reported that their current job allowed them to use their knowledge, skills, or abilities to a large extent. In regards to job satisfaction, 76% (n=72) of respondents reported that their knowledge, skills, and abilities matched the requirement of their current job to a large or a very large extent, and they were considered fully employed. However, only a little more than half (57%; n=54) reported that their current job fulfilled their needs. A little less than half (46%; n=43) reported that their current job enabled them to do the kind of work they want to do. Almost 57% (n=54) noted that their current job was a good match for them.

Table 8
Job Satisfaction (n=95)

To what extent does/is your…	A little extent	To some extent	A large extent	Mean (SD)
…knowledge, skills, and abilities match the requirements of your current job?	7%	7%	76%	4.1 (1.1)
…current job fulfill your needs?	20%	35%	45%	3.5 (1.2)
…current job a good match for you?	21%	22%	57%	3.6 (1.2)
…your current job enable you to do the kind of work you want to do?	28%	27%	46%	3.3 (1.3)

Takeaway
The majority of retrospective respondents were satisfied with their knowledge, skills, and abilities and how these skills matched to the requirements of their current job. However, respondents were less satisfied with their jobs in terms of fulfilling their needs, enabling them to do the kind of work they want to do, or believing their job is a good match for them. Perhaps participants perceived that they were overqualified for their jobs, thus acknowledging that their knowledge, skills, and abilities met the requirements for their current jobs. However, they were less satisfied with the job in other ways (e.g., needs fulfillment).

Financial Well-being
Respondents were asked about their financial worry, current financial condition, and specific financial situations they may have experienced.

Financial Worry. Participants were asked to drag a needle to the left or right to indicate "how often do you worry about being able to meet normal monthly living expenses." The response options ranged from never worry (0) to worry all the time (10). A third of the participants (n=64) responded that their financial worry was between zero and three; 32% (n=62) responded their financial worry was between four and six, and 34% (n=66) responded their financial worry was a seven or higher. Participants were also asked to describe their overall financial condition. The response options included very "comfortable and secure," "able to make ends meet without much difficulty," "occasionally have some difficulty making ends meet," "tough to make ends meet but keeping my head above water," and "in over my head." Sixty-three percent (n=140) of the sample noted that they were in good shape financially, 23% (n=50) noted they were doing OK, and 11% (n=25) stated they were struggling or in over their head. Figure 11 illustrates financial worry responses.

Figure 11
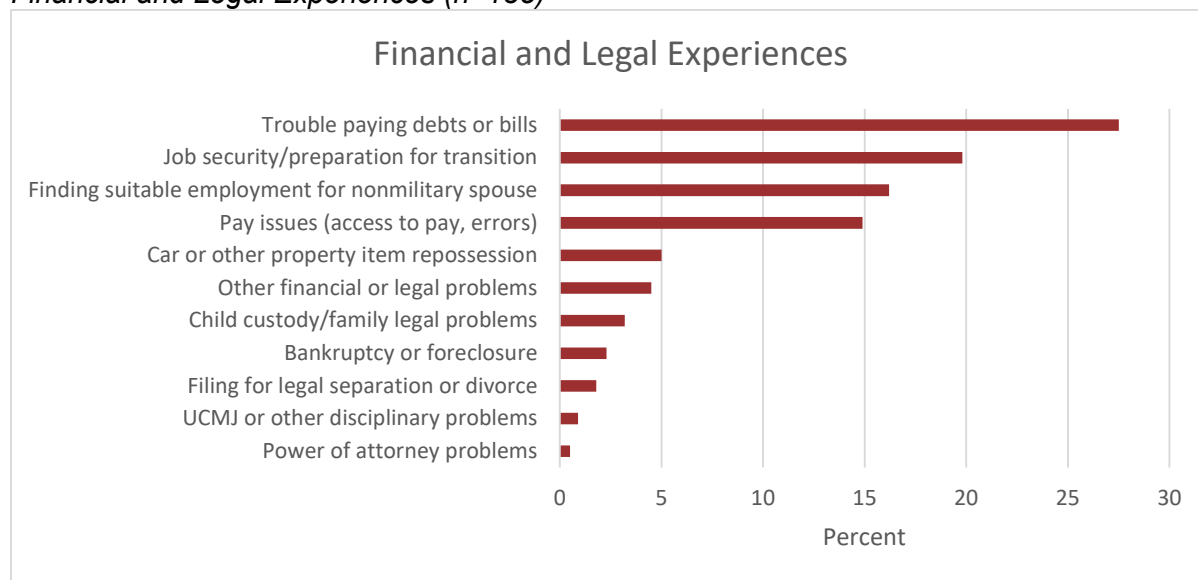*Financial Worry (n=192)*

Financial Worry

Takeaway
A significant proportion of people have some level of financial worry. However, in response to the financial condition survey question, the majority of the participants (63%) indicated they were in good shape financially. Not surprisingly, there was a significant association between rank and financial condition. Eighty-seven percent (n=20) of enlisted ranks were more likely than officers (13%; n=3) to report they were in over their head or that it was tough to make ends meet. There was a significant association between financial condition and participants' next reported PCS. Forty-four percent (n=8) of those who reported their next PCS as over 2 years from now (indicating a probable recent PCS) were more likely to indicate difficulty in making ends meet or being in over their head.

Participants were also asked about a number of specific legal or financial experiences they may have encountered in the past year. There were a total of eleven specific situations that were presented (see Figure 12 below). Sixty-one percent (n=135) reported experiencing at least one financial situation. Of that group, 81 respondents (60%) experienced one financial situation. 27% (n=37) experienced two financial situations. Seventeen respondents (13%) experienced three or more different financial or legal situations. A little under a third of the participants (31%; n=42) had experienced finding suitable employment for a non-military spouse, or job security and preparation for transition. When accounting for those two response options, less than half (42%; n=93) of the ERP sample reported experiencing at least one of the other financial or legal experiences.

Figure 12
Financial and Legal Experiences (n=135)

Financial and Legal Experiences

Trouble paying debts or bills	
Job security/preparation for transition	
Finding suitable employment for nonmilitary spouse	
Pay issues (access to pay, errors)	
Car or other property item repossession	
Other financial or legal problems	
Child custody/family legal problems	
Bankruptcy or foreclosure	
Filing for legal separation or divorce	
UCMJ or other disciplinary problems	
Power of attorney problems	

Percent

Takeaway
The majority of ERP participants had experienced at least one of the financial or legal experiences in the past year. The most common experiences reported includes trouble paying debts or bills, job security and preparation for transition, finding suitable employment for non-military spouse, and pay issues. However, when accounting for transition preparation and non-military spouse employment challenges, less than half of the sample had experienced a financial or legal situation, which may suggest that these are important challenges for spouses and Service members. Of those who had trouble paying bills, occasionally, almost half (48%, n=29) reported it was difficult to make ends meet, and just under one third (31%, n=19) of this population reported they were in over their head.

Military Life Satisfaction

ERP participants were asked a series of questions about different aspects of their satisfaction with military life. The response options included "very dissatisfied" (1), "dissatisfied" (2), "neither satisfied or dissatisfied" (3), "satisfied" (4), and "very satisfied" (5). Response options were collapsed into three categories for ease of presentation with "very dissatisfied" and "dissatisfied" collapsed into one category ("dissatisfied"), and "satisfied" and "very satisfied" collapsed into the other category ("satisfied").

Well over two-thirds of ERP participants were satisfied with military life (72%; n=154). This was also the item with which ERP participants were most satisfied. ERP participants were most dissatisfied (20%; n=43) with the support and concern that the Army has for them and their family.

Table 9

Military Life Satisfaction (n=215)

Overall, how satisfied are you with…	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Mean (SD)
…the military way of life?	11%	17%	72%	3.8 (.95)
…the respect the Army shows family members?	15%	23%	61%	3.6 (1.1)
…the support and concern that the Army has for you and your family?	20%	22%	58%	3.5 (1.1)

Service Member Satisfaction with Military Employment

Service members were asked about their satisfaction with their military employment as an indicator of retention motivations. The response options included "very dissatisfied" (1), "dissatisfied" (2), "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" (3), "satisfied" (4), and "very satisfied" (5). Service members were generally satisfied or very satisfied with military employment (69%; n=37). The mean satisfaction with military employment was 3.7 (.97).

Figure 13

*Service Member Satisfaction with Military Employment (n=54)*
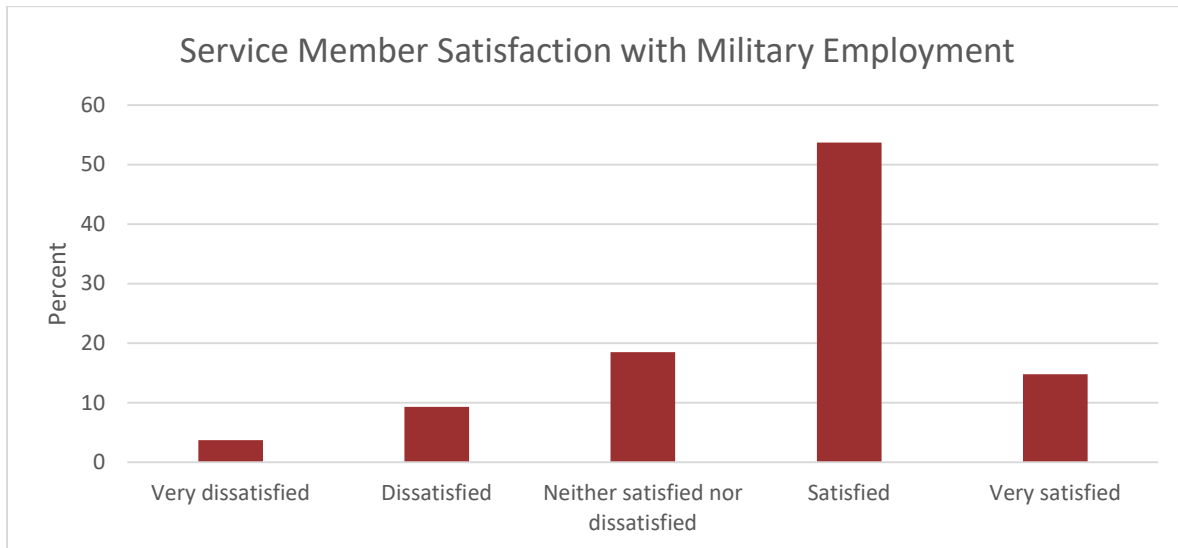
Takeaway
More than two thirds of Service members (69%) are either satisfied or very satisfied with their employment, which may indicate that Service members are transitioning for reasons unrelated to their military employment.

Spouse Preference for Retention

Spouses were asked if they favored their Service member spouse staying in the military or leaving at the next opportunity. The response options included "I strongly favor leaving" (1), "I somewhat favor leaving" (2), "I have no opinion one way or the other" (3), "I somewhat favor staying" (4), and "I strongly favor staying" (5). Slightly less than two thirds (66%; n=78) favored their Service member spouse staying in the military. The mean for this item was 4.0 (1.3).

Figure 14

Spouse Preference for Retention (n=119)

Spouse Preference for Retention
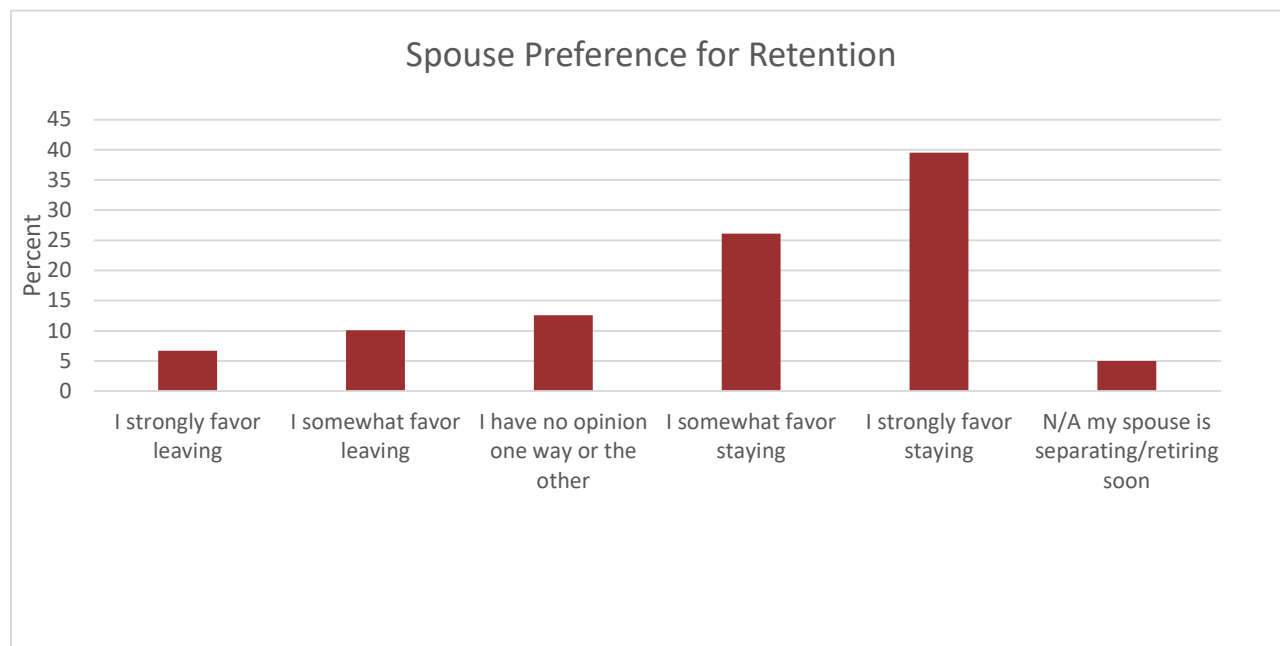
Takeaway
Two thirds of spouses (66%) favored their spouse staying in the military.

Further Analyses of Retrospective Data

Further analyses of the retrospective data were conducted to examine how participation in ERP impacts employment-related outcomes. Analyses assessed changes in employment outcomes (i.e., job status or job satisfaction) as a result of demographic characteristics, participation in specific services, or varying amounts of services.

Job Status

Differences based on demographic characteristics. Chi-square tests were used to examine the association between employment and the following: education, duty station, paygrade, age, race, number of relocations, and length of time as a military family. No significant associations were found from those analyses. However, a significant association was found between job status and being a spouse ($X^2(4)>=19.229$, p=.001). This finding indicates that being a military spouse influences ability to obtain a job.

Differences based on job status. The job status outcome variable was dichotomized into two response options: those who were unemployed (i.e., those individuals who were not currently working but seeking work) and those who were employed either full time or part time. A logistic regression was conducted to determine if there was a relationship between spouse status and employment status (i.e., employed or unemployed). There was a significant negative association

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between spouse status and being employed (p<0.05). Spouses were 93% less likely to be employed. Separate logistic regression analyses found that there was no significant relationship between employment status and education, duty station, paygrade, age, race, number of relocations, or length of time as a military family. As active duty Service members were not asked about their employment status, spouses were much less likely to be employed than Reserve, Guard, and retired Service members using the ERP. The majority of these Service members in the evaluation were employed (91%; n=11) and using ERP.

Differences based on motivation for working. A logistic regression was run to determine the relationship between job status and motivations for working. Individuals who were working to pay bills were two times more likely to be employed than those who selected other motivation for working reasons (p=.041). This finding may indicate that individuals who are looking for jobs to pay the bills rather than working for other reasons (e.g., personal fulfillment) seem to accept jobs to obtain income.

Differences based on ERP service usage. A chi-square test was run to examine the association between job status and the most used ERP services (i.e., resume writing, job fairs, and job opening announcements). No association was found between job status and participation in resume writing services, job fairs, and announcements of job openings. Separate logistic regression analyses also confirmed no significant relationship between job status and participating in resume writing, announcements of job openings, and job fairs.

A logistic regression was used to examine whether the number of services used was related to job status. Categorical variables were created to examine the total number of services used. For the number of services used, two separate analyses were run. The first analysis examined the difference between using one ERP service and multiple ERP services. The second analysis examined the differences among three categories of service use (i.e., one to three services, four to six services, and seven to ten services). No differences were found between number of ERP services used and job status. Thus, the number of services a participant used did not impact whether they found a job.

Finally, a logistic regression was used to examine whether the number of services used was related to receiving an interview. There was no relationship between the number of ERP services used and receiving an interview. Similar to the finding above, the number of services a participant used did not impact whether an interview was received.

Differences in military satisfaction based on employment. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine differences in military satisfaction based on employment status. No relationship was found between employment status and military satisfaction. For this study, employment status did not appear to impact the satisfaction with the military among spouses.

Job Satisfaction
Differences based on ERP service usage. One-way ANOVAs were run to compare whether there were differences in job satisfaction based on the number of ERP services used or the specific services used. The same process was followed as indicated in the job status analyses described above. There was no significant difference in job satisfaction and number of services used, or

type of services used, specifically the top three services used (i.e., resume writing, announcements of job openings, and job fair usage), and job satisfaction. Thus, job satisfaction was not impacted by participation in ERP.

Differences based on motivation for working. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare if there were differences in job satisfaction based on different motivations for working. There was no significant difference between reasons for working and job satisfaction.

OCONUS Garrison

In the retrospective sample, OCONUS and CONUS garrisons were examined visually due to small numbers (n=15) based on demographic and outcome factors to see if there were any differences (although not necessarily significant) between these types of garrisons. Individuals at OCONUS installations were more likely to report personal fulfillment for their primary reason for working (47%; n=7) than other response options. They were also less likely to report being employed. A quarter (n=3) of those at OCONUS installations were employed full time compared to 45% (n=68) at CONUS installations. Half of the respondents (n=6) at OCONUS garrisons are seeking work compared to 24% of CONUS garrison respondents (n=26). Half of the participants (n=4) at OCONUS garrisons reported their job search was less than 3 months compared to 37% (n=30) of CONUS respondents. Moreover, one respondent at an OCONUS garrison received an interview compared to 53% (n=43) of CONUS respondents.

Twenty-nine percent (n=4) of the OCONUS sample reported a financial worry score of 10 compared to 10% (n=18) in the CONUS sample. Moreover, the proportion of OCONUS respondents who noted they were in over their head in terms of finances was higher (14% n=2) compared to respondents in the CONUS sample (2%; n=3). However, 71% (n=10) in the OCONUS sample reported being very comfortable or able to make ends meet without much difficulty.

> Takeaway
> Further analyses did not reveal associations related to job status or job satisfaction. One noteworthy exception was a negative association with job status and spouse status (i.e., spouses were less likely to have a job). Moreover, those who were looking for jobs to pay bills were more likely to be employed than those whose primary motivation to work was another reason (e.g., personal fulfillment).

Prospective Participant Data Collection Results

Data Collection Timeline

A prospective longitudinal survey was conducted as part of this evaluation. It was designed to examine the perceptions of current/recent ERP participants or those who used the program beginning at the start of the evaluation period. Prospective ERP users were invited to complete surveys at three time points: once following initial participation in the program (within 30 days),

approximately 60 days after the initial survey, and approximately 90 days after the initial survey was completed. Data collection started on July 8, 2019. However, some garrisons had to start recruitment later than this date. Therefore, to ensure that all garrisons had adequate time to send initial email invitations and three reminder invitations, the recruitment period for the prospective group stayed open from July 8 – August 19, 2019. Timelines for follow-up survey invitations were adjusted to allow for approximately the same amount of time between waves for each participant, irrespective of the start date. Three reminder emails were sent after the invitation to each wave of data collection. The wave/initial surveys were completed between July 8 – August 19, 2019, the wave two 60-day follow-up surveys were completed between September 9 – October 14, 2019, and the wave three, 90-day follow-up surveys were completed between October 15 – November 30, 2019.

Overall Initial Survey (Wave 1) Response Rate
Response rate details are summarized below in Table 10.

Table 10
Prospective Survey (Wave 1) Response Rate

Sample Size	Responses Submitted Online	Complete Responses	Duplicate Respondents*	Ineligibles**	Revised total	% Response
232	75	72	6	12	54	23%

*As detailed on page 19, some respondents completed the survey more than one time.
** Because initial recruitment was managed by the ERP PMs, the Clearinghouse could not confirm that all ERP participants who received the survey link were eligible to complete the survey; thus, if a participant began a survey but based upon his or her answers to the screener questions was deemed not eligible to complete the survey, (e.g., non-Army DoD employee or spouse of a DoD employee) he or she was reported as ineligible.

Follow up Survey Response Rates
Of the 232 participants invited, a sample of 54 eligible ERP users participated in the prospective study (23%) at Wave 1. Approximately three-quarters (74%; n=40) of Wave 1 participants completed Wave 2, and 65% (n=35) of Wave 1 participants completed Wave 3. Two participants (4%) completed Wave 1 and Wave 3 but not Wave 2.

Table 11

Follow-up Survey Response Rates

Initial Wave 1 Sample Size	# Participants From Wave 1 Who Completed Wave 2 (60 Day Follow-up)	# Participants From Wave 1 Who Completed Waves 2 and 3	# Participants From Wave 1 Who Completed Wave 3 Only
54	40 (74%)	35 (65%)	2 (4%)

Prospective Respondent Characteristics

Prospective participants at Wave 1 were asked about their demographic characteristics. The majority of the participants in the survey were spouses (64.1%; n=34), enlisted (72.4%; n=34), female (74.5%; n=38), and had post-high school training (81%; n=44). The mean age for ERP prospective participants was 35.1 years old. ERP participants had been in the military or part of a military family about 10.38 years on average and had relocated 3.04 times. Respondents were at different stages in the PCS cycle. Of the 34 respondents to this question, 21% (n=7) were transitioning within the next 12 months, 15% (n=5) were anticipated to be transitioning in between 1 and 2 years, and 31% (n=17) were anticipated to transition in over 2 years from the time the survey was completed. See Table 12 for all participant characteristics.

Notable differences in comparison to the retrospective sample are detailed here. There were slightly fewer active duty spouses in the prospective sample (50.9% v. 54.1%), more spouses of retired military (9.4% v. 4.1%), and more spouses of Reserve Service members (3.8% v. 1.4%). The prospective sample also had less active duty Soldiers (15.1% v. 24.8%), more retired military (9.4% v. 5%), more Reserve Service members (1.9% v. .5%), and slightly more DoD employees (9.4% v. 8.1%) than the retrospective. There were slightly more enlisted participants in the prospective survey (72.4% v. 68.5%). In regards to race and ethnicity for the prospective study, there were less White (52.8% v. 64.9%) and American Indian or Alaskan Native (1.9% v. 3.6%) participants and more participants from other races: Black or African American (32.1% v. 25.2%), Asian (11.3% v. 8.1%), and Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (1.9% v. .5%). Non-Hispanic ethnicity was roughly the same (79.2% in comparison to 81% in the retrospective). There were slightly more females in the prospective (74.5% v. 71.6%). The response options for the highest level of education obtained were different between the two surveys; however, the percentage of the participants with an associate's degree or higher was similar (72.2% in the prospective compared to 73.9% in the retrospective). Age, number of relocations, and length of time as a military family were similar between the two samples.

Table 12

*Prospective Respondent Characteristics (n=54)*

	Percent/Mean (SD)
Spouses	
Active duty spouse	50.9%
Spouse of retired military	9.4%
Reserve spouse	3.8%
Surviving spouses	-
Guard spouse	-
Service members	
Active duty Soldier	15.1%
Retired military	9.4%
Reserve member	1.9%
Guard member	-
Army DoD employee	9.4%
Paygrade	
E1-E4	25.5%
E5-E9	46.9%
W1-W4	8.5%
O1-O3	6.4%
O4-O6	12.8%
Race	
White	52.8%
Black or African American	32.1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.9%
Asian	11.3%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1.9%
Non-Hispanic	79.2%
Female	74.5%
Age	35.1 (10.2)
Highest Level of Education	
Completed HS/GED	18.5%
Post HS vocational/tech training	9.3%
Associate's degree	18.5%
Bachelor's degree	29.6%
Graduate or professional school	24.1%
Length of time as military family	10.4 (8.1)
Number of relocations	3.0 (2.8)

Notes. SD = Standard Deviation. The response options for the demographic question on "Race" were "select all that apply." The sample size varies by individual question.

Garrison Response Rate

The surveys were completed by respondents at nine of the ten participating garrisons. Fort Drum and Fort Carson had the highest participation and accounted for a little over half of the prospective sample (n=28; 54%). There were three "Other" garrison responses. The other responses included those who may be using nearby resources from the ERP evaluation garrisons (i.e., Fort Belvoir, and Mattydale Reserve Center). As discussed on page 19, limited participation was anticipated at the three TRADOC garrisons of Fort Benning, Fort Knox, and Fort Leavenworth due to budget cuts that severely impacted the ERP's ability to participate in the evaluation efforts, particularly for the prospective sample since it relied on current and future use of ERP services, which were largely no longer available.

Figure 15

Garrison Response Rate (n=52)
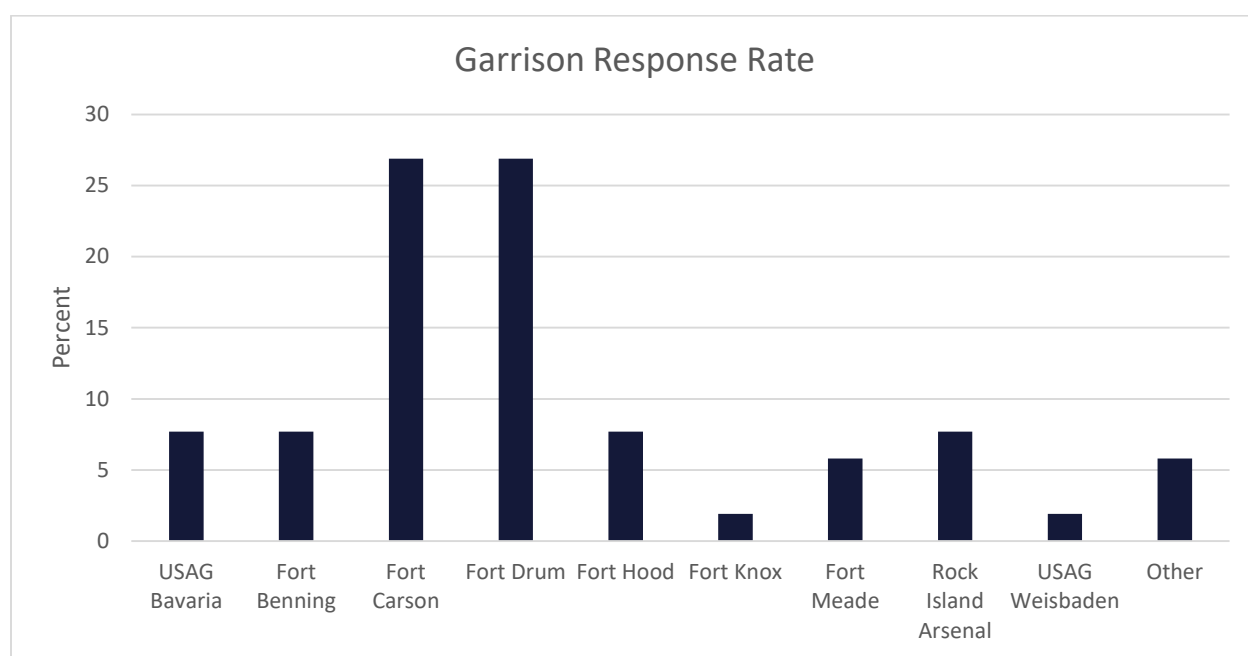
Note: Two respondents did not provide garrison information.

> Takeaway
> Prospective survey respondents from two garrisons made up a little over half of the sample. Due to changes in personnel, prospective survey respondents from the TRADOC garrisons (i.e., Fort Benning and Fort Knox) were not expected to participate; however, because there were some responses, it is likely that some minimum level of program services were being provided.
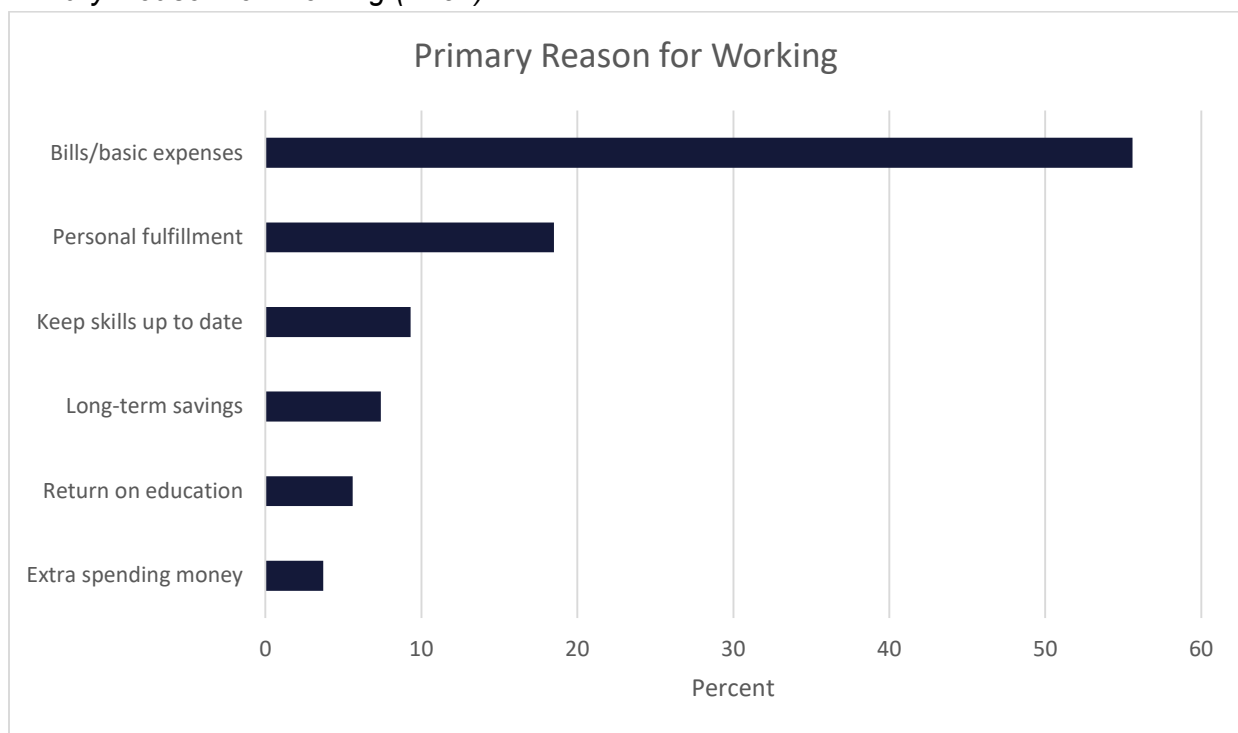
Primary Reason for Working

Figure 16 below details ERP prospective survey respondents' primary reason for working and use of the ERP. These questions were only asked at Wave 1. More than half (56%) of the participants

listed their primary reason for working was to pay bills and basic expenses. The other top two primary reasons for working included personal fulfillment (19%) and keeping skills up to date (9%).

Primary reasons for working in the prospective sample were similar to the reasons given in the retrospective sample. Both samples listed their primary reason for working as to pay bills and basic expenses. The second most common reason for working was personal fulfillment. However, the samples differed on the third most common reason for working. In the prospective sample, this reason was keeping skills up to date. In the respective sample, the third most common response was long-term savings (11%). Long-term savings was the fourth most important reason in the prospective sample (7%; n=4). In the retrospective sample, keeping skills up to date was tied for last as the most important reason for working (3.2%; n=7)

Figure 16
Primary Reason for Working (n=54)

Takeaway
Paying for bills and basic expenses was the primary reason for working for more than 50% of prospective survey respondents.

Primary Reason for Using the ERP
The majority of the prospective survey respondents were using ERP for the first time (60%; n=31) and had only used it at their present duty station (71%). A little less than one third (28%) of the participants noted that they used ERP at more than one duty station. Wave 1 prospective participants noted the primary reason they were using the ERP was because they were looking

for a job (69%; n=35). Prospective participants were asked about their continued use of the ERP at Wave 2 and Wave 3. Sixty-two percent (n=24) of Wave 2 respondents reported still using the ERP, and 51% (n=18) of Wave 3 respondents were still using the ERP.

In comparison to the retrospective survey sample, prospective survey participants were more likely to indicate that they were currently looking for a job (69% in comparison to 28% in the retrospective), which makes sense given the typical length of time it takes to secure employment. However, given that retrospective survey participants had previously participated in ERP and were perhaps more likely to have already obtained a job, retrospective survey participants were asked if they initially used the ERP to look for work but had found a job since participating. Taking that into account when comparing primary use of ERP across the two samples, both samples were predominantly using ERP to look for work (58% in the retrospective compared to 69% in the prospective).

Figure 17
Primary Reason for Using the ERP (n=51)
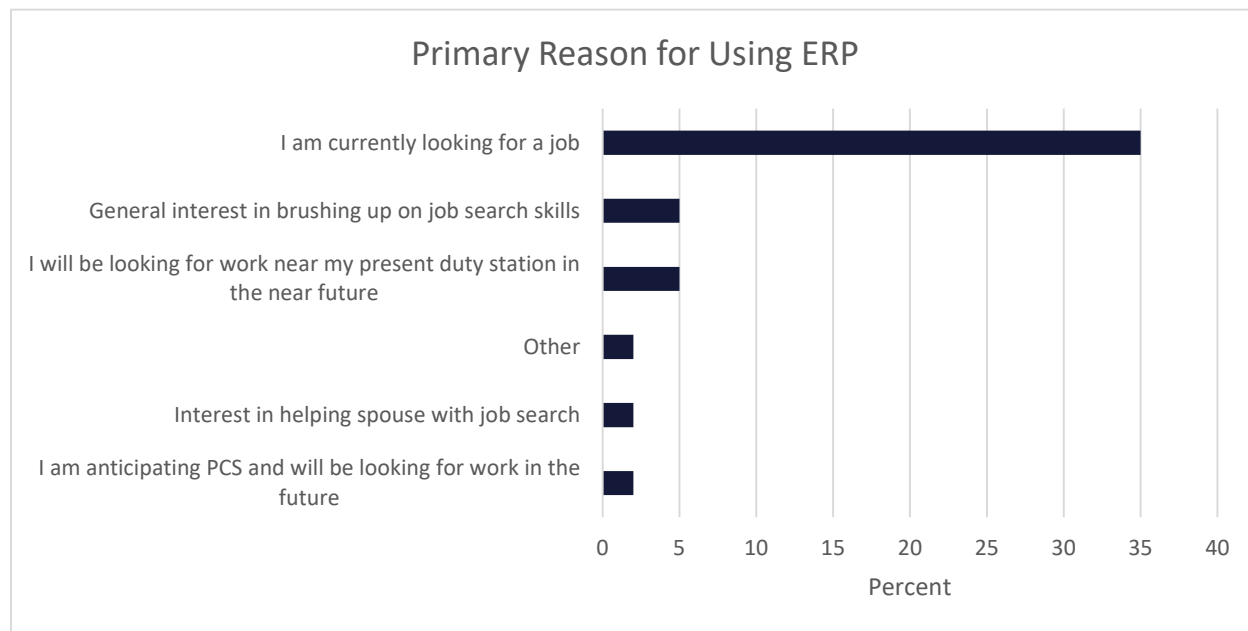
Note. "Other" responses include "help with career clothes" and "trying to discover myself through volunteerism."

Takeaway
Most prospective survey participants were using the ERP because they were currently looking for a job.
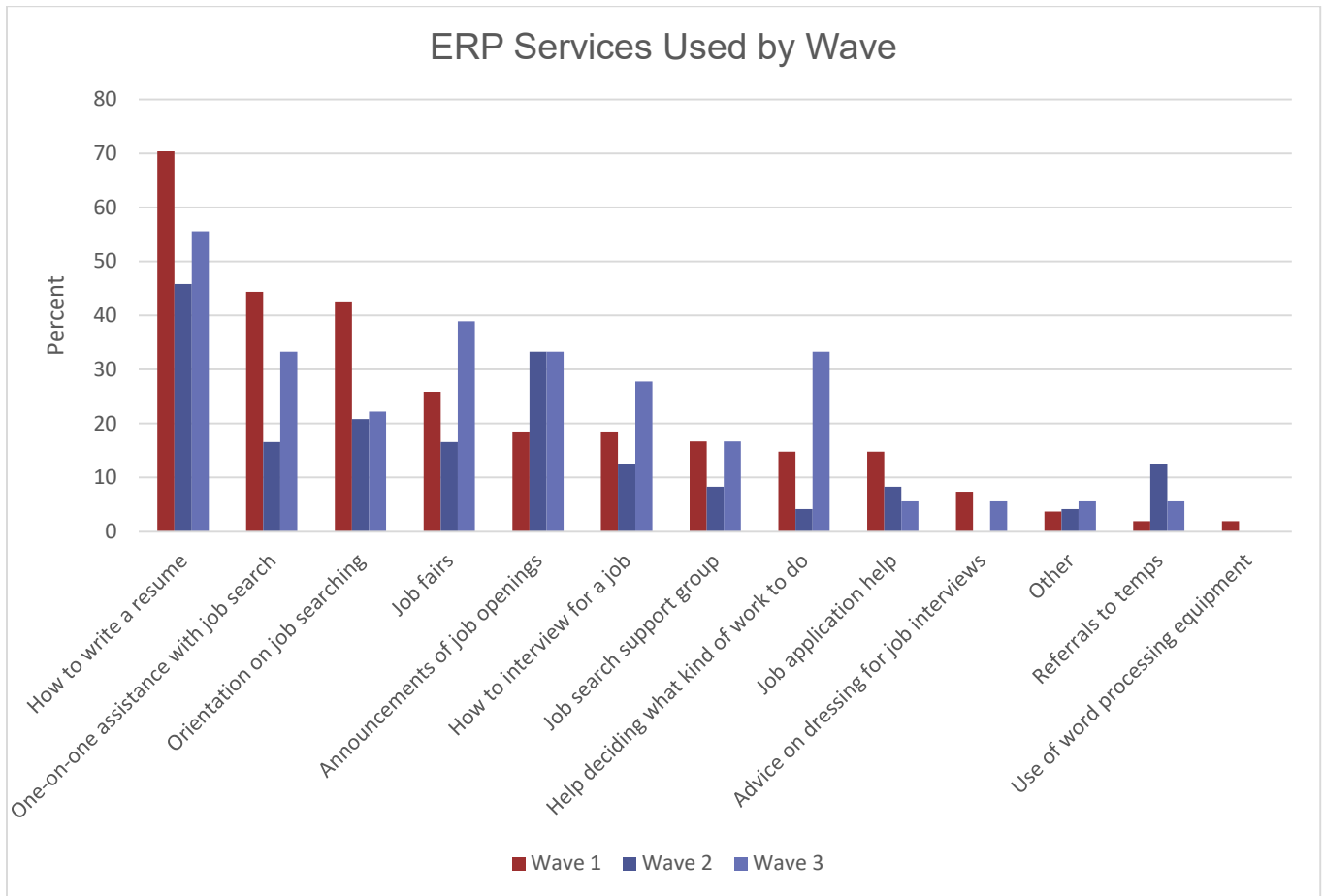
Use of ERP Services

The most common services used at Wave 1 included "how to write a resume" (70%; n=38), "one-on-one assistance with job search" (44%; n=24), "orientation of job searching skills/services" (43%; n=23), "job fairs" (26%; n=14), and "announcements of job openings" (19%; n=10). At Wave 1, almost half of ERP users (46%; n=25) used three or more ERP services (max=8), while 28% of ERP users (n=15) used only one service, and 20% (n=11) of ERP users used two services.

Among users who continued participating in the ERP at Wave 2 (62%; n=24), the most common services used included "how to write a resume" (46%; n=11), "announcements of job openings" (33%; n=8), "orientation on job searching skills/services" (21%; n=5), "job fairs" (17%; n=4), and "one-one assistance with job search" (17%; n=4). At Wave 2, almost half of the users only used one ERP service (48%; n=11), 26% (n=6) used two services, and 26% (n=6) used three or more services (max=5).

At Wave 3, among users who continued participating in the ERP (51%; n=18), the most common services used included "how to write a resume" (56%; n=10), "job fairs" (39%; n=7)), "announcements of job openings" (33%; n=6), "one-on-one assistance with job search" (33%; n=6), and "help deciding what kind of work to do" (33%; n=6). At Wave 3, 22% (n=4) used one ERP service, 44% used two ERP services, and 33% (n=6) used three or more ERP services — the maximum total number of services used by anyone was seven. Resume writing was the most frequently used ERP service at Wave 1 (70%; n=38), Wave 2 (46%; n=11), and at Wave 3 (56%; n=10). The most commonly used services were similar across waves. In Waves 1 and 2, "help deciding what kind of work to do" was mentioned by 15% (n=8) and 4% (n=1), respectively.

The most common ERP services used were similar across the retrospective and prospective samples. More detailed information about the use of Federal jobs resume writing and job-search classes will be presented in the summary of data from the telephonic interviews.

Figure 18
ERP Services Used by Wave

Note. ERP services are presented in the figure in order of frequency of use at Wave 1.

> **Takeaway**
> The majority of prospective survey participants used the ERP for resume writing services, which was a similar finding for the retrospective sample. Telephonic interviews revealed that resume writing services were predominately related to resume writing for federal jobs.
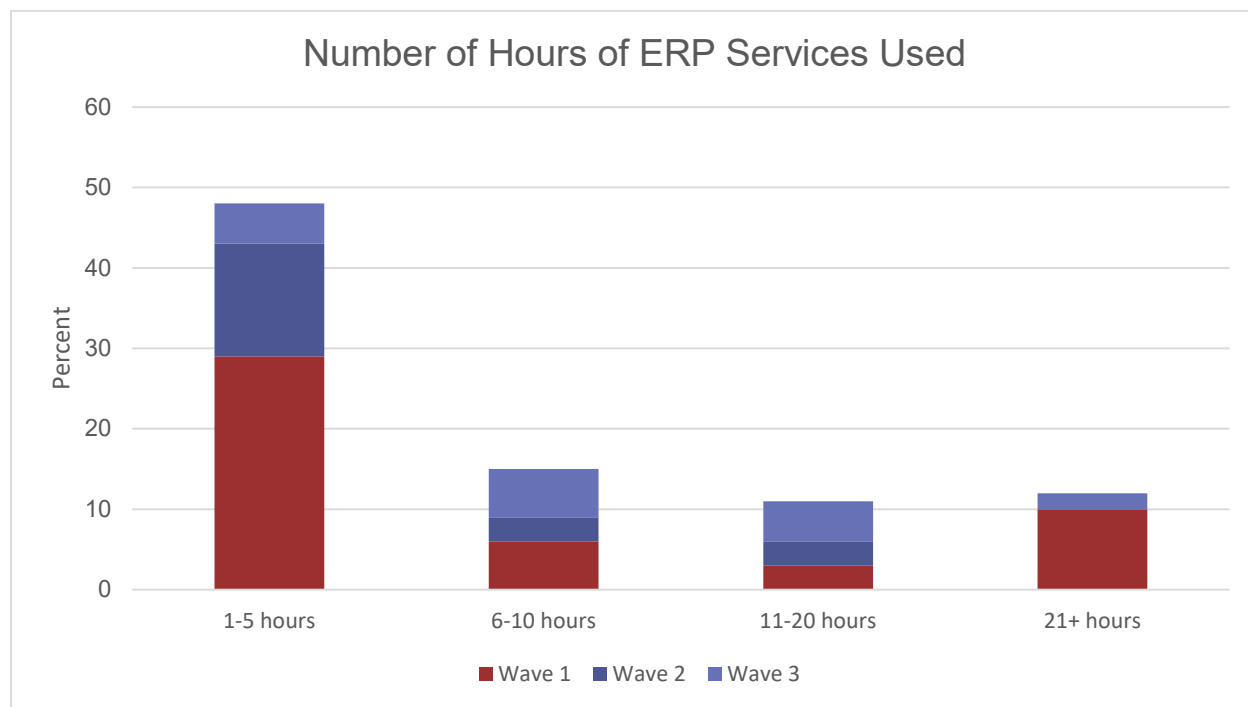
ERP Dosage — Hours Used

In the prospective survey, participants were asked to write in the total number of hours of ERP services they used. The number of hours of use varied by Wave. At Wave 1, the mean number of hours used was 13.4 (SD=19.1). At Wave 2, the mean number of hours was 5.6 (SD=4.8). At Wave 3, the mean number of hours was 11.7 (SD=9.8). When examining participants use of ERP in clusters of time (e.g., 1-5 hours), the majority of the participants at Waves 1 and 2 used 5 hours or less of ERP services (W1: 60% n=29; W2: 70% n=14). At Wave 3, hours used were split across

the first three time clusters (i.e., 1-5 hours, 6-10 hours, and 11-20 hours), and the largest number (33%; n=6) reported using 6-10 hours of ERP services.

Figure 19

Number of Hours of ERP Services Used

Other Employment Services Used

Participants were asked at each wave if they were using employment services outside of ACS-ERP including other military-affiliated employment services they may have used. A significant minority used only ACS-ERP (W1: 32% n=17; W2: 28% n=15; W3: 24% n=13). Among those who used other services to aid in furthering their employment goals, many used outside resources. At Wave 1, the most commonly used external services were "job fairs" (30%; n=16), "resume writing" (28%; n=15), "announcements of job openings" (15%; n=8), "orientation of job searching

skills/services" (15%; n=8), and "help deciding what kind of work to do" (13%; n= 2). At Wave 2, "resume writing" was the most frequently used service (17%; n=9), followed by "announcements of job openings" (13%; n=7) and "job fairs" (11%; n=6). At Wave 3, "resume writing" was the most frequently used service (22%; n=12), followed by "announcements of job openings" (13%; n=7) and "job fairs" (13%; n=7).

Figure 20

Other Employment Services Used
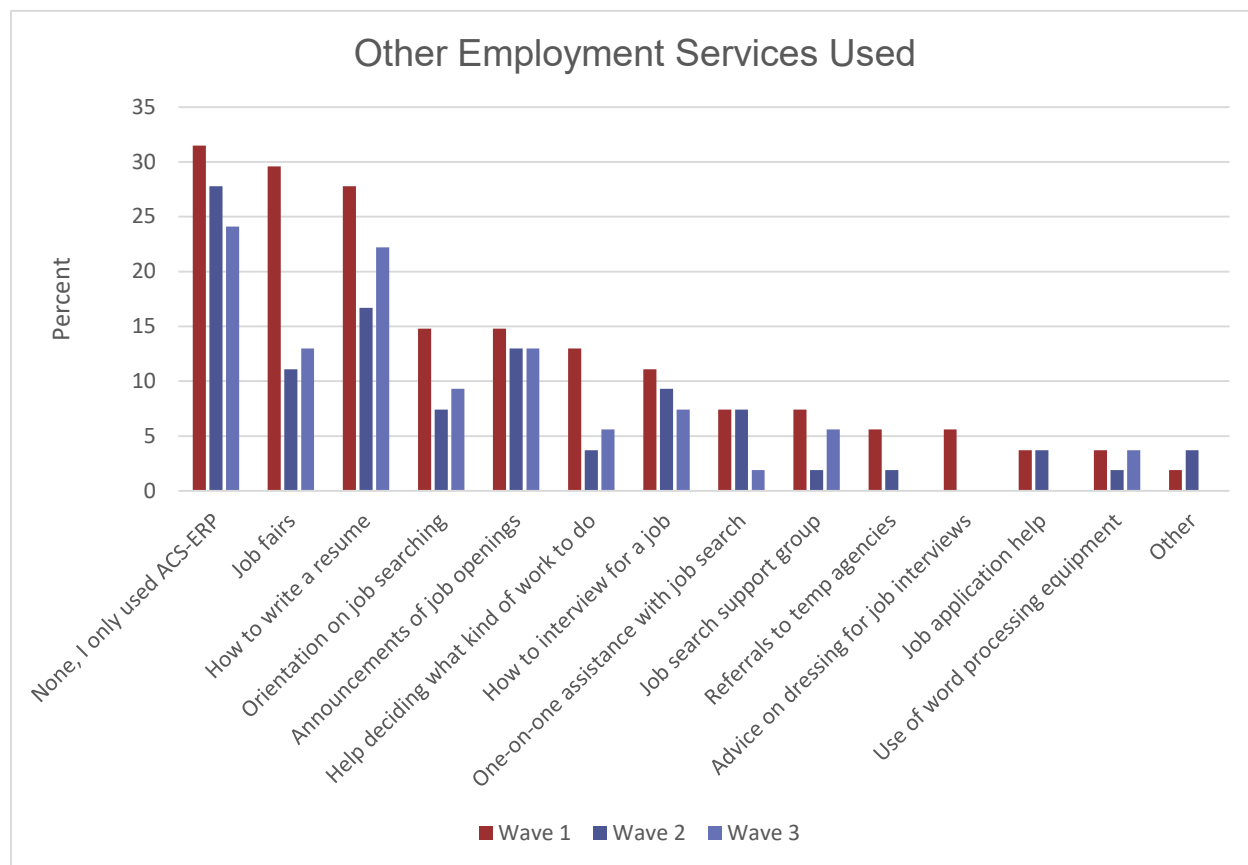
Note. "Other" included specific programs such as *Wounded Warrior Work Program* and the *USAJobs* website.

Takeaway
More than half of the participants used other employment services outside of the ERP. The outside services were similar to those within the ERP. The most commonly used outside resources were resume writing services and job fairs.

Participants were also asked about other military-affiliated (not ACS) employment programs they have used at each wave. More than half of ERP participants (61%; n=33) used other military-

affiliated programs to help with employment. Across waves, 15% (n=8) of the participants used SECO at Wave 1, 9% used SECO (n=5) at Wave 2, and 11% used SECO (n=6) at Wave 3. Thirteen percent (n=7) of the participants used MSEP at Wave 1, and 7% (n=4) reported using MSEP at Wave 3. No one reported using MSEP at Wave 2. Across waves, 20% (n=11) of the participants used SFL-TAP at Wave 1, 7% (n=4) used SFL-TAP at Wave 2, and 9% (n=5) reported using SFL-TAP at Wave 3. For Military OneSource, 28% (n=15) of the participants reported using it at Wave 1. At Wave 2, 20% used Military OneSource (n=11), and, at Wave 3, 11% (n=6) of the participants reported using Military OneSource. Since spouses made up the majority of the ERP sample, it is worthy to note that, when examining Service members use of SFL-TAP, 57% (n=8) of all Service members reported using SFL-TAP at Wave 1, 18% (n=2) of Service members used SFL-TAP at Wave 2, and 33% (n=9) of Service members reported using SFL-TAP at Wave 3.

Program usage, whether ERP participants were reporting previous usage, new usage of the program, or continued use, was not clear. Therefore, when interpreting results, note usage over time may represent the same users. For example, some participants reported using TAP at all three waves, while some used it only at the first and third waves. Only one new participant reported using TAP at Wave 2 and one at Wave 3.

Figure 21
Use of Other Military-Affiliated Employment Services
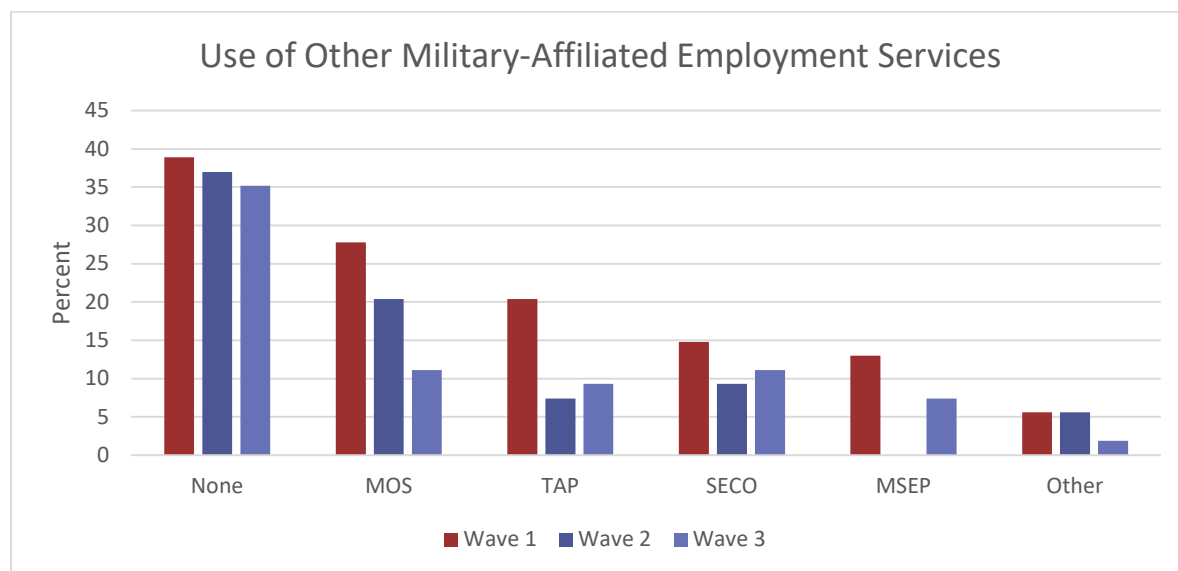
Note. "Other" responses included the job resources *Indeed*, *Monster*, and *Onward to Opportunity*. The responses included in "Other" did not always meet the intent of the question, but they did provide more information about other employment resources used.

Takeaway
More than half of the participants used other military-affiliated programs for employment assistance. The most frequently used resources for employment assistance were SFL-TAP (i.e.,

Satisfaction with ERP Services

Overall, ERP prospective participants were highly satisfied with the program and individual ERP activities and services. Ninety-two percent (n=47) of the participants said they would recommend ERP overall. Participants were also asked about satisfaction with the individual services they reported using. The response options ranged from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5). Satisfaction was relatively high across all services used. However, sample size varied across services and across waves. Note, the sample size for many of the individual services was single digits. With the exception of one service in Wave 2 (i.e., resume writing), all services in Waves 2 and 3 have a single-digit sample size. When sample sizes are too small, the mean score can be artificially inflated or deflated. For a breakdown of satisfaction by service across waves, see Table 13.

Table 13

Satisfaction with ERP Services

Satisfaction with….	W1 Mean (SD)	W2 Mean (SD)	W3 Mean (SD)
How to write a resume	4.5 (.76)	4.6 (.69)	4.4 (.53)
Job-search orientation	4.4 (1.1)	4.2 (.84)	3.8 (1.9)
One-on-one job search	4.4 (1.1)	4.3 (.58)	4.8 (.41)
Job fairs	4.3 (1.1)	4.0 (0)	4.7 (.52)
Job opening announcements	4.3 (1.3)	4.2 (.98)	4.3 (.52)
Help completing job apps	3.7 (1.6)	5.0 (0)	5.0 (*)
How to interview for a job	4.6 (.52)	3.0 (2.8)	4.6 (.55)
Deciding what kind of work to do	4.4 (.89)	3.0 (*)	4.6 (.55)
Word processing equipment	5.0 (*)	-	-
Job-search support group	4.2 (1.1)	5.0 (*)	4.7 (.58)
Advice on dressing for job interview	4.7 (.58)	-	5.0 (*)
Referrals to temp agencies	5.0 (1.1)	5.0 (0)	5.0 (*)

Notes. Services are presented in order by frequency of use at Wave 1. (*) Indicates that there was only one valid response; therefore, standard deviation cannot be calculated. Sample sizes vary by service and wave.

Participants were asked for open-ended feedback that described their satisfaction with the ERP. A sampling of excerpts that demonstrate the variability in satisfaction are presented below.

Highly Satisfied or Satisfied

- "Excellent tool for those military spouses that are looking for help such as how to build a resume, military spouse preferences."
- "ACS gives us spouses the option to be more than just the spouse. Military sometimes forgets that we serve too. It's nice to be acknowledged as a participating support family member."

- "I walked into the SFAC Office on a Friday afternoon at (garrison name) after being there only a couple of days. I had seen a job posting on USAJOBS that was closing the following Monday and got a crash course from a staff member there who so very helpful, even though she was the only one with the ACS-ERP there that afternoon. She gave me homework for the weekend and had me come in for additional help via an appointment that coming Monday to make sure my application looked great. She was very knowledgeable. I liked that they have an onsite computer lab so staff can help you physically walk through the application process because I am a visual learner."
- "The staff is very knowledgeable about programs and available resources. The staff is able to guide me to jobs, write a better resume, and help me network. I've had more success working with the ACS-ERP than I have when attempting to find a job on my own. I found their class on Federal Resume to be extremely helpful."
- "I just appreciate the constant emails that are sent with a spreadsheet that list all jobs that are hiring within the area. If I don't see these jobs on Indeed I like the fact that the ACS has already put this together and they found more than what I can find. I also like the volunteer spreadsheet because they give so much helpful information so that you may contact the employer."

Mixed Satisfaction
- "There needs to be more employees available for the family members trying to get help."
- "The information received was very helpful, but the way in which it is communicated was really disappointing. The representative lacked people skills, communication skills, and customer service."
- "Very helpful in person, but not responding to emails."

Dissatisfied
- "I was sent to a website never shown how to fill out apps or how to write a government resume."
- "I would like to see all ERP's have the same standards across the Army. Because some duty stations are better than others. The number one goal should be spouse first and others second. Also, there should be an education requirement to be hired as workers in the programs and the counselors should be all GS11's and above."

Takeaway
Overall, ERP prospective participants were highly satisfied with the program and individual ERP activities and services. Job-search orientation was the only service where satisfaction decreased over time; however, as this service is considered an orientation, one might expect that it would be perceived as less valuable to provide the same or similar orientation information over time.

Confidence in Job-Search Skills Efficacy

Prospective participants were asked at each wave to rate their confidence with different job-search skills or their sense of JSSE as a result of participating in the ERP. The scale ranged from zero, or not at all confident, to four, very confident. Baseline JSSE was relatively high with a mean score of 3.2. All items on the JSSE scale were relatively high at Wave 1 (i.e., after initial program use). Overall, the lowest scoring item, using friends or other contacts to discover promising job openings, was at Wave 2 with a mean of 2.8.

Table 14

Job-Search Skills Confidence

	W1 Mean (SD)	W2 Mean (SD)	W3 Mean (SD)
Make the best impression to get points across during an interview	3.2 (1.1)	3.2 (.83)	3.2 (1.1)
Contact and persuade employers to be considered for a job	3.0 (1.1)	3.0 (1)	3.2 (1.2)
Complete a good job application or resume	3.3 (.9)	3.3 (.85)	3.5 (.94)
Use friends or other contacts to discover promising job openings	3.1 (1)	3.0 (1)	3.1 (1.3)
Use friends and other contacts to find out about employers who need your skills	3.1 (.96)	2.8 (1.1)	2.9 (1.3)
Make a good list of all of your skills that can be used to find a job	3.3 (1)	3.0 (1.1)	3.1 (1.2)
Overall JSSE	3.2 (.88)	3.0 (.83)	3.1 (1.05)

Note. Sample sizes vary by question and wave.

Takeaway
Participant confidence in sense of JSSE was relatively high at baseline (3.2) and remained stable across waves. Outside of job status, this was an important indicator of program effectiveness.

Job-Search Behaviors

Participants were asked how often they had completed a number of activities throughout their job search. Response options ranged from never (0) to very often (4). Participants reported engaging in most of these job-search activities, *"seldom"* (1), "sometimes" (2), "often" (3), or "very often" *(4)*, with the exception of speaking with previous employers or business acquaintances about their knowledge of potential job leads —this behavior was used less frequently.

Table 15

Job-Search Behaviors

	W1 Mean (SD)	W2 Mean (SD)	W3 Mean (SD)
Contacted people you know to ask for their advice or leads regarding your job search	2.3 (.96)	2.3 (1.1)	2.5 (1.1)
Called or visited someone just to get more information about a certain job or place to work	2.2 (.82)	1.9 (1.2)	2.1 (1.3)

Asked for a referral to someone who might have helpful information or advice about your career or industry	2.1 (.91)	2.0 (1.3)	2.2 (1.1)
Secured leads from contacts or acquaintances regarding a person to contact for information that would help you in your job search	2.3 (.84)	2.0 (1.2)	2.2 (1.1)
Talked with friends or relatives about possible job leads	2.7 (.94)	2.4 (1.2)	2.3 (1.2)
Spoke with previous employers or business acquaintances about their knowledge of potential job leads	1.9 (1.1)	1.7 (1.3)	1.8 (1.3)

*Note.* Sample sizes vary by question and wave.

Takeaway
Participants were only sometimes engaging in networking as a job-search behavior. The ERP may want to refine its curriculum to increase skill-based learning of various networking techniques.

Job-Search Status: Looking for Work

Both spouses and Service members were asked whether they were currently looking for work. There were only two valid responses for the reasons active duty Service members were looking for work, retirement or transitioning out of service. At Wave 1, approximately 74% (n=39) were looking for work, 13% (n=7) were not looking for work, and 13% (n=7) were not currently looking for work but anticipated looking for work in the near future. The number of participants looking for work decreased across waves. At Wave 2, 68% (n=27) were looking for work. At Wave 3, 60% (n=21) were looking for work. At Wave 1, among those who were employed, 11% (n=4) were looking for work and working part time, and 22% (n=8) of the participants were employed full time and looking for work.

Compared to retrospective survey participants, prospective survey participants were more likely to be looking for work (74% v. 41%); this fact, again, confirms that the participants who were selected for each sample were chosen effectively. Roughly, the same number of participants in the retrospective and prospective surveys were employed and looking for work.

Figure 22

Job-Search Status: Looking for Work


Job-Search Status: Looking for Work
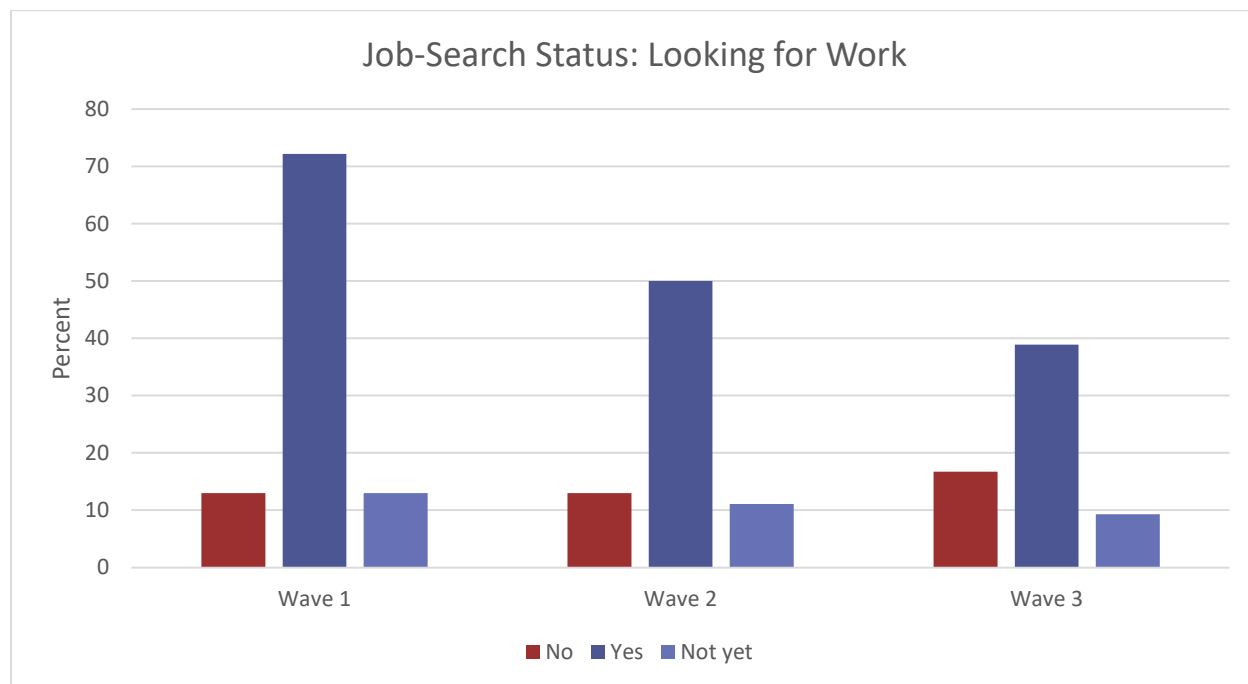
Takeaway
The number of participants looking for work decreased over time. Among those looking for work, one third had current employment in either part-time or full-time work.

Current Employment Status

Figure 23, below, details prospective respondents' employment status. At Wave 1, 27% (n=12) of the participants were employed full time — at least 35 hours a week, and 9% (n=4) were working part time. Forty-seven percent (n=21) were not currently working but were seeking work, and 11% (n=5) were not currently working or looking for work. Seven percent (n=3) responded with "Other" in regards to employment status. The open-ended "Other" responses included "volunteering," "starting soon," and "in training, but do not like the job." Notably, 67% (n=8) of those employed full time were looking for work.

Respondents were asked at Waves 2 and 3 whether they were employed at the same job as when they completed the last questionnaire to capture changes in employment since a significant proportion of people were employed at Wave 1 and looking for new work. Approximately 19% (n=3) of Wave 2 participants received a new employment opportunity, and 27% (n=4) received a new job by Wave 3. At Wave 3, 37% (n=11) reported working full time, and 13% (n=4) reported working part time. Thirty-seven percent of the sample (n=11) still reported not working but seeking work. Ten percent (n=3) were still not working or seeking work.

Figure 23
Employment Status by Wave
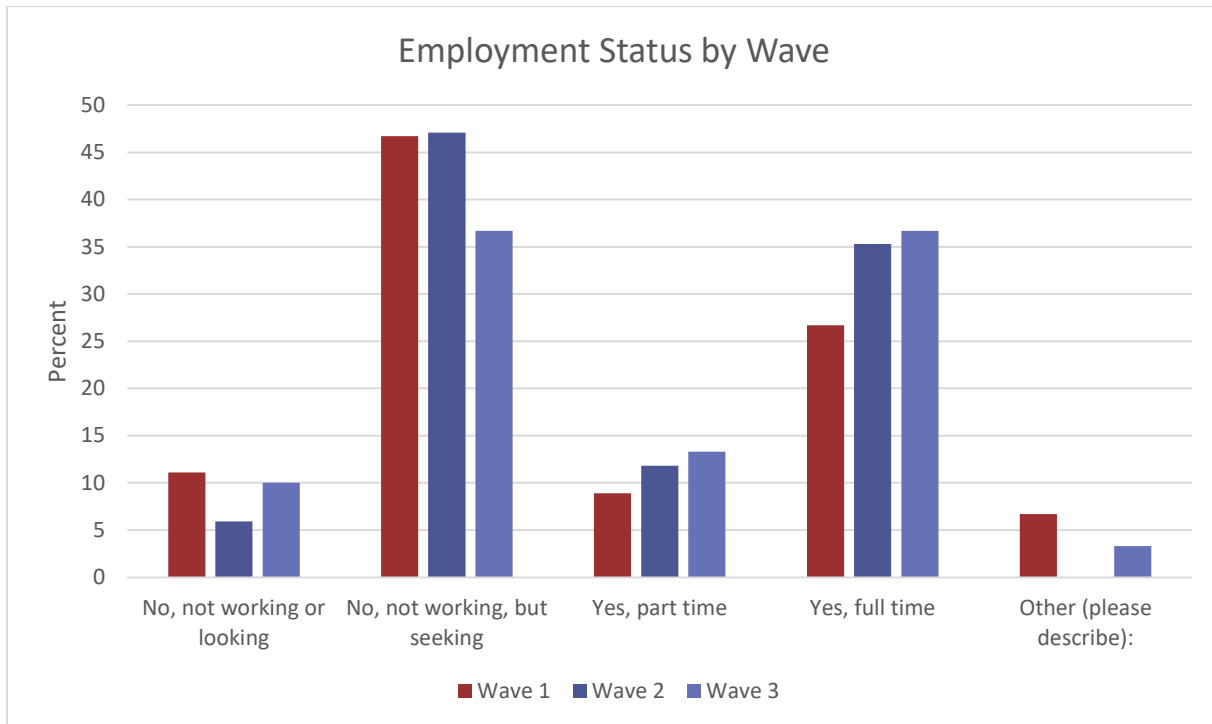
Takeaway
The number of individuals employed either part time or full time increased across waves. At Wave 3, 37% (n=11) are working full time. Notably, at Wave 1, 67% of the prospective sample was employed and looking for work. Between Waves 1 and 2 and Waves 2 and 3, about one quarter and one third, respectively, of prospective respondents were finding new employment. This potentially indicates that participants may be in a state of underemployment or perhaps searching for additional work even though employed.

Time Spent on Job Search
Time Spent Looking. Participants were asked about how much time they spend looking for a job in hours each week. At Wave 1 (n=39), participants spent 12.7 (sd=11.4) hours on their job search each week. At Wave 2 (n=24), participants spent 9.2 (sd=8.5) hours on their job search each week. At Wave 3 (n=20), participants spent 7.4 (sd=4.8) hours on their job search each week. The amount of time spent on the job search decreased across waves. However, there was variation between individuals' time on the job search as indicated by the standard deviation for the mean of each wave. Unlike the retrospective where individuals who spent less time looking represented the largest group still looking for work, in Wave 3 of the prospective, there do not appear to be any notable differences in time spent on the job search by employment status.

Length of Job Search. Those who were still looking for work were asked at Wave 1, to date, how long their job search has been (n=39). Among those who were looking for a job at Wave 1, 56% (n=22) had been looking for a job less than 3 months, 28% (n=11) had been looking for work 4-6 months, 13% (n=6) had been looking for work 7 months or more, and 3% (n=1) had been looking 2 years or more. In comparison to the retrospective sample, more prospective survey participants were at the beginning of their job search. Fifty-six percent of prospective survey participants compared to 38% of retrospective survey participants were between 1 and 3 months into their job search.

Takeaway
Participants in the prospective study were at the beginning of their job search and spending more than 12 hours looking for a job each week. The number of hours spent by participants looking for a job decreased across waves.

Obtained a Job Through ERP

If ERP users noted they were employed, they were asked if they believed they received a job as a result of participating in ACS-ERP. The response options included "Yes," "No," "Maybe," and "Not Applicable" with an open-ended text box for participants to explain their choices. Of those who were employed at Wave 1 (n=7), 71% (n=5) believed their job was due to ERP participation. Of the 10 people who were employed at Wave 2 and Wave 3, reviews were mixed as to whether use of the ERP had helped them obtain their jobs. At Wave 2, the largest response option was "Maybe" with 40% of the responses (n=4). At Wave 3, 40% (n=4) reported "No," 40% (n=4) reported "Yes," and 20% (n=2) stated "Maybe" to the belief that their job was due to ERP participation. Also, a number of people were already employed (33%; n=16) and using ERP either because they wanted to refresh or enhance job skills or stay current in job skills, prepare for the next duty station, or search for new or additional jobs. Additional questions were asked at subsequent waves to understand change in employment status. Selected quotes by response option about whether participants believed ERP helped them get a job are included in Table 16.

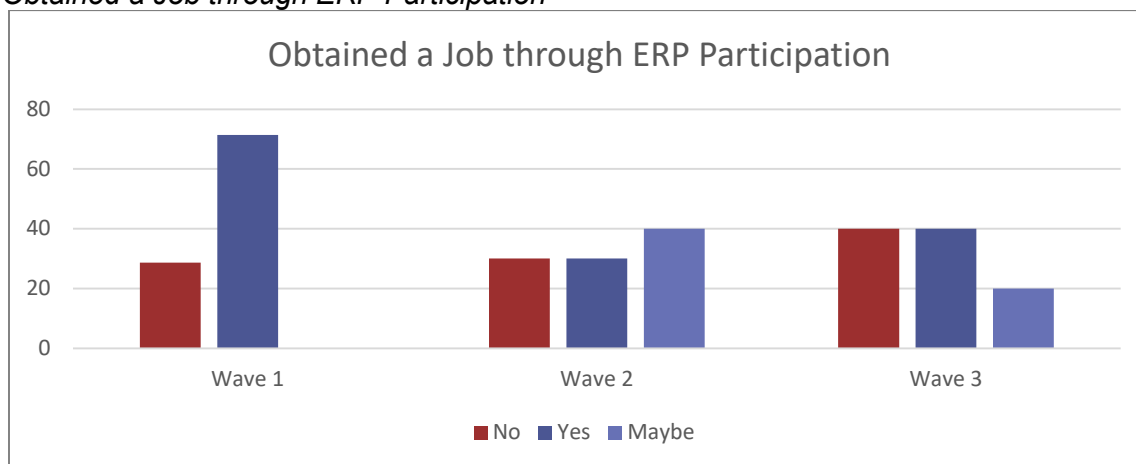**Figure 24**
Obtained a Job through ERP Participation

Obtained a Job through ERP Participation

Table 16

Selected Quotes: Believe Obtained a Job by Participating in the ERP

Yes	Maybe	No
"I was taught the tools and fundamentals of job prep through classes and one-on-one counseling."	"I have interviewed for three positions and offered one position that I declined due to location."	"Did not receive any assistance and was told to go to the website."
"Helped me write a federal resume to at least get an interview for a federal position."	"Referrals in process"	"Job list ACS-ERP send every week was not included healthcare categories."
"The first time I used the ACS-ERP I was taught how to build a strong resume. I also participated in an interview workshop."	"I am waiting for a call back from a job I applied for. I went for an interview and they liked my resume."	"Looked for job on my own."
"Explained how to write a federal resume."	"Some of the skills I learned in class may have helped me during an interview."	"The job I received was entry level position."
"Shown how to make my resume stand out."	"It helped me get my resume together to land the current job I have."	"This is not a USAJob."
"They gave me insight on how to make a stronger resume."		"Did not land job on base and did not keep searching on USAJobs because the available jobs for me were not meeting my expectations."

Takeaway
Responses were mixed about whether the ERP was the determining factor in helping participants get their current jobs. Seventy-one percent in Wave 1 reported that ERP helped them obtain employment, and in Wave 2 40% reported that the ERP helped them obtain employment.

Received an Interview/s as a Result of Participation in the ERP
At Wave 1, 36% (n=14) of the participants who did not receive a job (n=39) did receive an interview. Eleven percent (n=6) received an interview, and 15% (n=8) received two or more interviews. The most interviews received during Wave 1 was six. At Wave 2, among those who did not receive a job (n=26), 42% (n=11) reported receiving an interview. Thirteen percent (n=7)

received an interview. Eight percent (n=4) received multiple interviews —the maximum number of interviews received was five. At Wave 3, 35% (n=7) of those who did not receive a job (n=20) reported obtaining an interview. Forty-three percent (n=3) reported receiving one interview, and 57% (n=4) reported receiving two or more interviews. The most interviews received at Wave 3 was five.

Figure 25

Received an Interview(s) as a Result of Participation in ERP

Received an Interview(s) as a Result of Participation in ERP
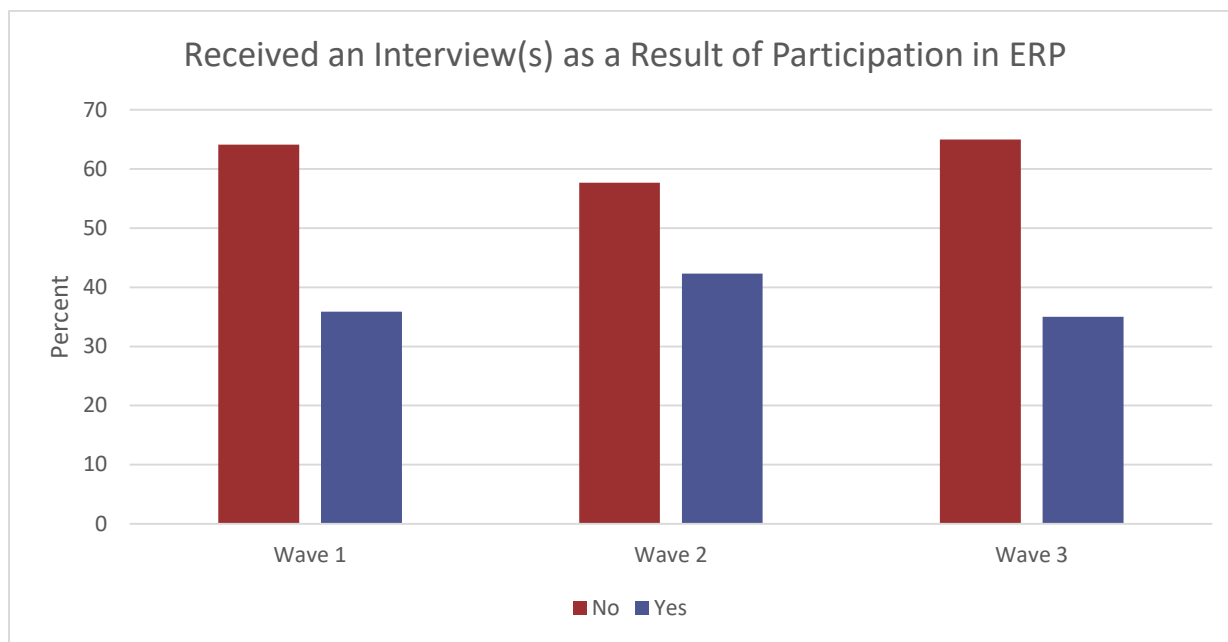
Takeaway
As a result of participation in the ERP at all waves, over one-third of the participants were receiving interview(s).

Reasons for Working Part-time Work

To capture potential underemployment, ERP participants were asked about their reasons for working part time (n=4). At Wave 1, 75% (n=3) of the participants working part time indicated they were working part time because they could only find part-time work. At Wave 2, 50% (n=2) indicated that they could only find part-time work, and, at Wave 3, 75% (n=3) indicated they could only find part-time work. However, there were only four participants in each wave who worked part time; therefore, given this small number, the results should be interpreted with caution.

Other reasons for part-time work varied across the waves. At Wave 1, one individual indicated part-time work because of other family or personal obligations. At Wave 2, one individual indicated part-time work because he or she did not want to work full time, and one individual indicated being self-employed. At Wave 3, one individual indicated part-time work because he or she was self-

employed. In a comparison to motivation for working and education, 50% (n=2) of part-time workers in the prospective sample reported working for personal fulfillment, 25% (n=1) reported working for long-term savings, and 25% reported working (n=1) to keep skills up to date. Fifty percent (n=2) of those employed part time reported having a master's, doctoral, or professional degree.

> **Takeaway**
> A small percentage of the sample was employed part time (W1: 9%; W2: 12%; W3: 13%). The majority of part-time workers indicated that they worked part time because they could not find full-time employment. This finding indicates underemployment or may be confounded by motivation for work.

Primary Field of Work*
At Wave 2 and Wave 3, prospective respondents were asked to describe their primary field of work based on a list of potential occupational fields. The top employment fields were as follows: 27% (n=8) healthcare, practitioner, therapist or support; 20% (n=6) sales or sales-related work; 10% (n=3) education, training-related work; 10% (n=3) office and administrative work; and 10% (n=3) manufacturing. At Wave 3, the top employment fields reported were as follows: 23% (n=3) healthcare, practitioner, therapist or support; 20% (n=6) office and administrative work; 13% (n=4) sales or sales-related work and manufacturing; and 7% (n=2) law or other legal work.

Figure 26
Primary Field of Work
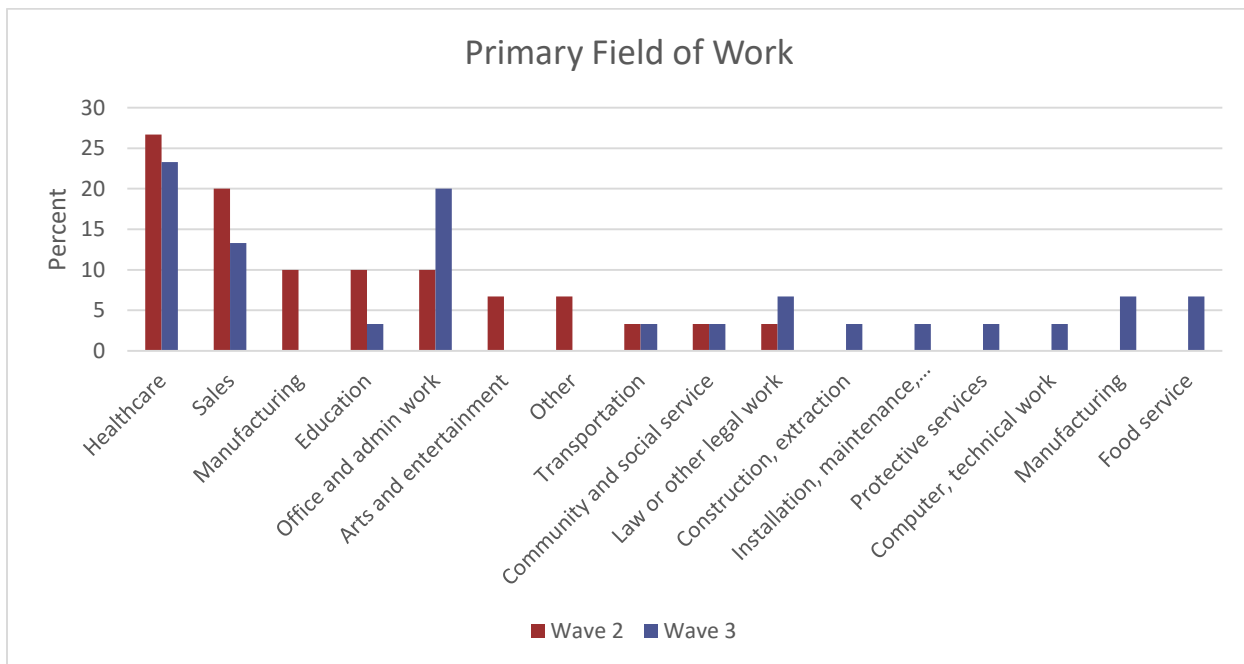
Unpaid Work

At Waves 2 and 3, ERP prospective participants were asked if they did any of the following types of unpaid work: full time care of children under the age of 18, full-time care of an adult (for example, spouse/parent/disabled child over 18), full-time homemaker without full-time child or adult-care responsibilities, or full-time student taking 12 or more credits. At Wave 2, 43% (n=17) reported no unpaid work. Thirteen percent (n=5) reported they were responsible for full-time care of children under the age of 18, and 13% (n=5) reported that they were a full-time student taking 12 or more credits of coursework. One person reported that he or she was a full-time homemaker. Five percent (n=2) noted the "Other" response (both of these indicated their other unpaid work was volunteering). Nearly three quarters of the participants (73%; n=24) did not experience any changes in unpaid work at Wave 3.

Figure 27
Unpaid Work
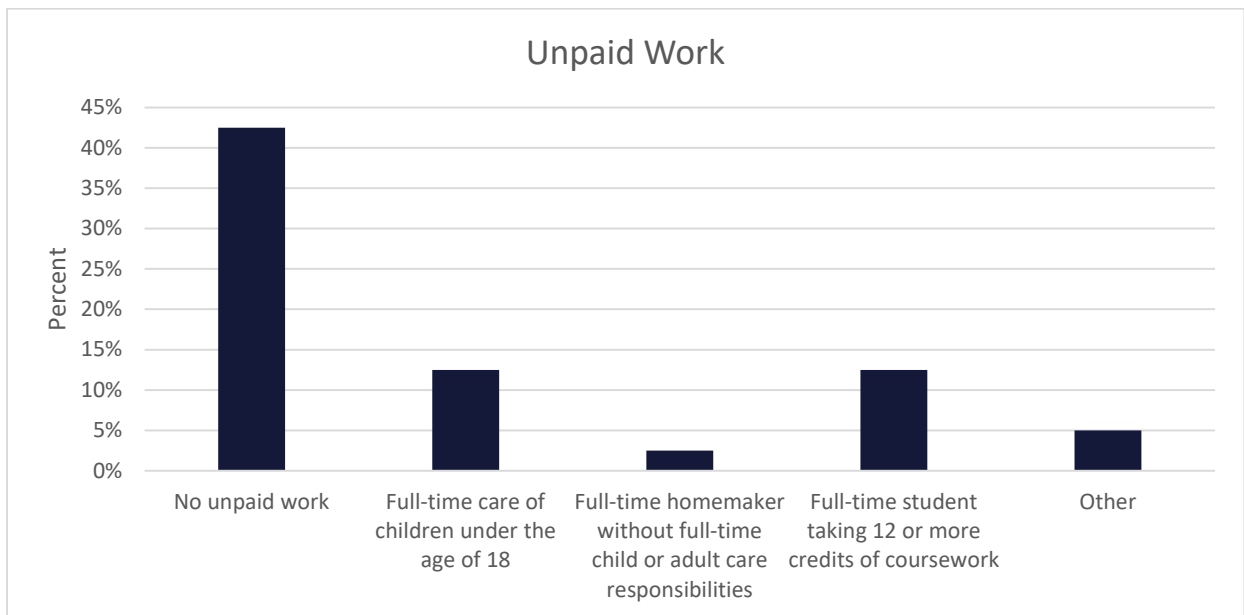
Volunteer Work. At Wave 2, 30% of ERP participants (n=12) indicated they participated in volunteer work. A third of these individuals (33%; n=4) were involved in at least two types of volunteer work. At Wave 2, the most common type of volunteer work was Army-related volunteering (9%; n=5). At Wave 3, volunteering activities were equally split across four categories (n=4): Army-related volunteering, provide general office services; engage in music, performance, or other artistic activities; engage in general labor; and/or supply transportation to people. At Wave

2, on average, participants (n=8) reported 7 (sd=5.8) hours of unpaid volunteer work each week. At Wave 3, on average, participants (n=4) reported 11.3 (sd=6.3) hours of unpaid volunteer work each week.

> **Takeaway**
> A third of ERP participants noted unpaid work responsibilities (e.g., child care), and a third also noted participating in volunteer work.

Job Satisfaction

If ERP participants were employed, they were asked a series of job satisfaction questions. The response options included "to a very little extent or not at all" (1), "to a little extent" (2), "to some extent" (3), "to a large extent" (4), and "to a very large extent" (5).

According to an MFRI (2007) study of spouse employment, these job satisfaction items were used as an indicator of underemployment. Spouses were considered underemployed if they reported that their current job only allowed them to use their knowledge, skills, or abilities to a little extent. At Waves 1 and 2, 6% (n=1) report that their knowledge, skills, and abilities did not match the requirements of their current job. However, nobody at Wave 3 selected this response option. Spouses were considered fully employed if they reported that their current job allowed them to use their knowledge, skills, or abilities to a large extent. Similar to the retrospective, 75% (n=12) of prospective respondents reported that their knowledge, skills, and abilities match the requirement of their current job to a large extent. Also, the mean knowledge, skills, and abilities match to their current job increased from Wave 1 to Wave 3.

However, similar to a finding in the retrospective sample, prospective participants were less satisfied with other aspects of their jobs. The mean extent to which their current job fulfills needs and enables participants to do the kind of work they want to do changed between waves. At Wave 1, 70% (n=11) of ERP participants reported their job fulfilled their needs at least to some extent. At Wave 3, 79% (n=11) reported that their job fulfilled their needs at least to some extent.

Table 17

Job Satisfaction

To what extent does/is your…	W1 Mean (SD)	W2 Mean (SD)	W3 Mean (SD)
…knowledge, skills, and abilities match the requirements of your current job?	4.0 (1.1)	4.0 (1.1)	4.6 (.74)
…current job fulfill your needs?	3.3 (1.1)	3.3 (1)	2.9 (.83)
…current job a good match for you?	3.3 (1.2)	3.3 (1.2)	3.1 (1.2)
…your current job enable you to do the kind of work you want to do?	3.1 (1.3)	3.3 (1.3)	2.9 (1.2)
Overall Job Satisfaction Mean	3.4 (.99)	3.4 (1.05)	3.4 (.83)

Note. Sample sizes vary by question and wave.

Financial Well-being

Respondents were asked about their financial worry, current financial condition, and specific financial situations they may have experienced.

Financial Worry. Participants were asked to drag a needle to the left or right to indicate "how often do you worry about being able to meet normal monthly living expenses." Responses ranged from never worry (0) to worry all the time (10). At Wave 1, 26% (n=13) responded that their financial worry was between zero and three; 27% (n=14) responded their financial worry was between four and six, and 47% (n=24) responded that their financial worry was a seven or higher. At Wave 3, 22% (n=7) of respondents reported that their financial worry was between zero and three; 38% (n=12) reported their financial worry was between four and six, and 41% (n=13) responded that their financial worry was a seven or higher.

Prospective survey participants reported slightly higher financial worry than retrospective survey participants. Mean financial worry at Wave 1 was 6.0 (sd=2.9), and at Wave 3 the mean financial worry was 5.71 (sd=2.9). The mean financial worry for retrospective participants was 5.0 (sd=3.2).

Figure 28

Financial Worry
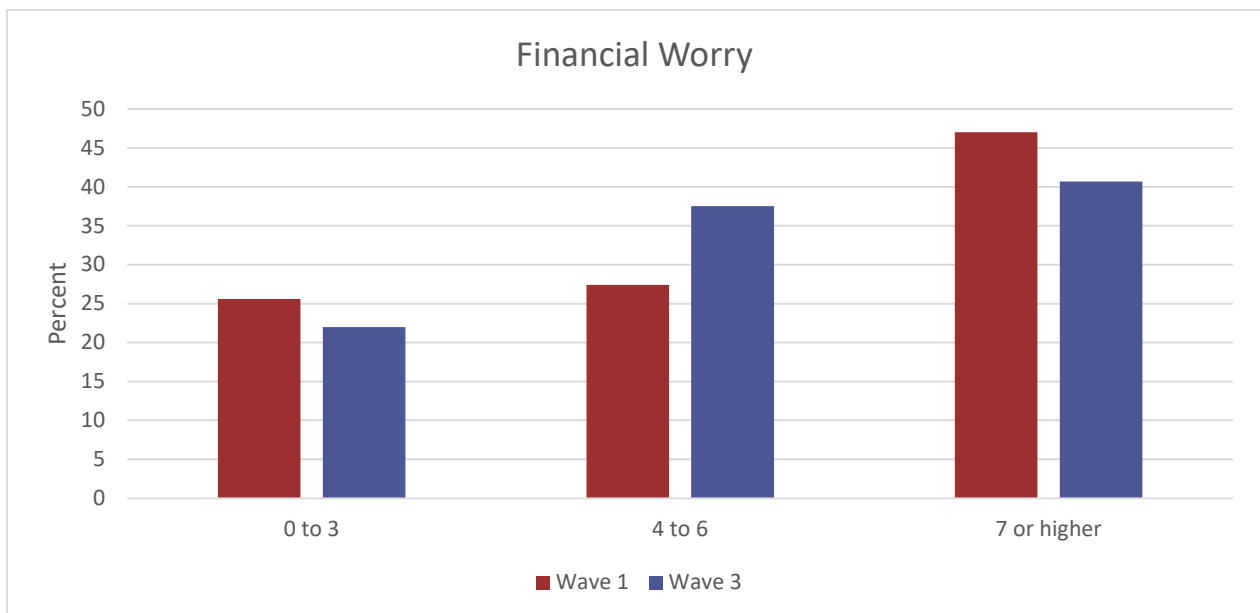
Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State

www.militaryfamilies.psu.edu

Financial Condition. Prospective survey participants were also asked to describe their overall financial condition. The response options included "very comfortable and secure," "able to make ends meet without much difficulty," "occasionally have some difficulty making ends meet," "tough to make ends meet but keeping my head above water," and "in over my head." At Wave 1, 49% (n=26) of the sample noted that they were in good shape financially, 30% (n=16) noted they were doing OK, and 21% (n=11) stated that they were struggling or in over their head. At Wave 3, 54% (n=20), noted that they were able to make ends meet or were very comfortable, while 46% (n=4) stated that they were struggling or in over their head. Figure 29 illustrates financial condition responses.

Figure 29
Financial Condition
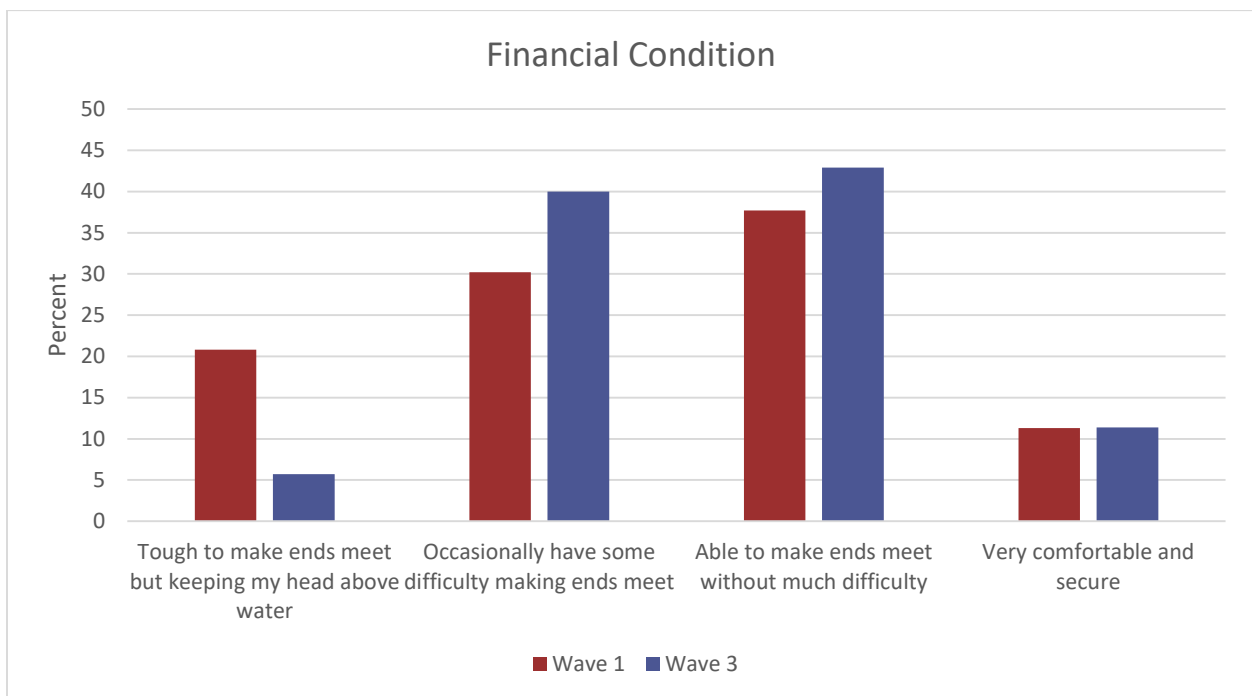
Financial and Legal Experiences. Participants were also asked about a number of specific legal or financial experiences they may have encountered in the past year. There were 11 specific situations that were addressed (for response options see Figure 30 or the question in Appendix B). At Wave 1, 50% (n=27) reported at least one financial situation. Among those who reported experiencing various financial and legal situations, 26% (n=14) of the respondents experienced one financial problem, and 13% (n=7) experienced two financial problems. Six respondents (11%) experienced three financial problems. At Wave 1, the most common financial problem reported was trouble paying debts or bills (26%; n=14), followed by job security and preparation for transition (19%; 10) and finding suitable employment for non-military spouse (17%; n=9). These remained the top reported financial challenges at Wave 3. Forty-four percent (n=24) reported that they did not experience any of the financial problems asked about at Wave 1. At Wave 3, 32% (n=12) reported that they did not experience any of the above problems.

Figure 30
Financial and Legal Experiences=
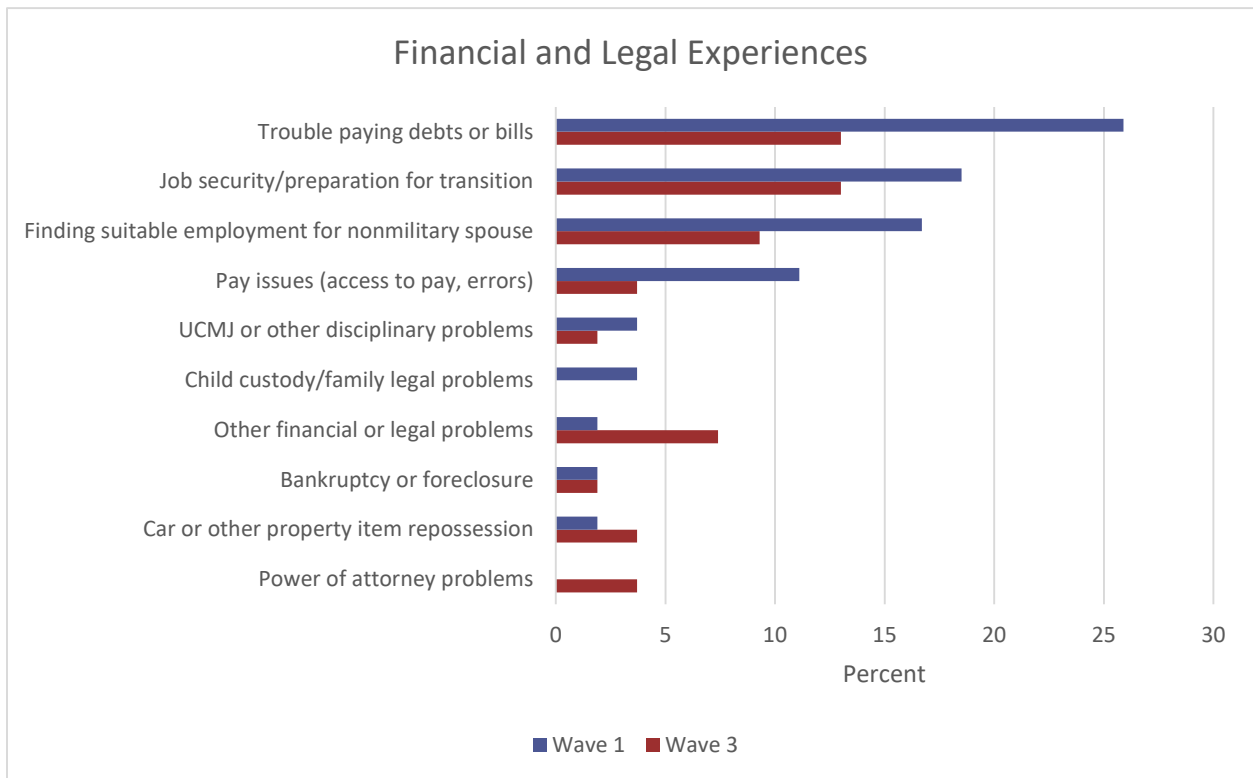
About half of the prospective sample noted experiencing at least one financial or legal experience at Wave 1. The most common situations experienced included trouble paying debts or bills, job security/preparation for transition, and finding suitable employment for non-military spouse. The majority reported having fewer financial and legal experiences at Wave 3 than at Wave 1.

Military Life Satisfaction

ERP participants were asked a series of questions about different aspects of their satisfaction with military life. The response options included "very dissatisfied" (1), "dissatisfied" (2), "neither satisfied or dissatisfied" (3), "satisfied" (4), and "very satisfied" (5). Only Service members who were employed were asked about their satisfaction with military employment.

Overall, participants expressed satisfaction with military life. Satisfaction with military employment and the respect the Army shows family members decreased slightly between Wave 1 and Wave 3. Satisfaction with the support and concern that the Army has for you and your family and the military way of life remained stable across time.

Table 18

Military Life Satisfaction

Overall, how satisfied are you with…	W1 Mean (SD)	W3 Mean (SD)
…the military way of life?	4.0 (.83)	4.0 (1.0)
…your military employment?	4.3 (1.0)	3.8 (1.3)
…the respect the Army shows family members?	3.9 (1.1)	3.8 (1.2)
…the support and concern that the Army has for you and your family?	3.7 (1.1)	3.7 (1.2)

Takeaway
The majority of ERP participants were satisfied with military life. Participants reported the highest satisfaction with the military way of life and the least amount of satisfaction with the support and concern that the Army has for you and your family.

Spouse Preference for Retention

Spouses were asked if they favored their spouse staying in the military or leaving at the next opportunity. The response options included "I strongly favor leaving" (1), "I somewhat favor leaving" (2), "I have no opinion one way or the other" (3), "I somewhat favor staying" (4), and "I strongly favor staying" (5). Intentions to stay in the military were slightly higher at Wave 1 (3.8) than at Wave 3 (3.4). At Wave 1, 61% (n=17) of spouses reported that they somewhat or strongly favored staying in the military. At Wave 3, only half of the spouses (50%; n=9) reported that they somewhat or strongly favored staying in the military.

Figure 31
Spouse Preference for Retention

Spouse Preference for Retention
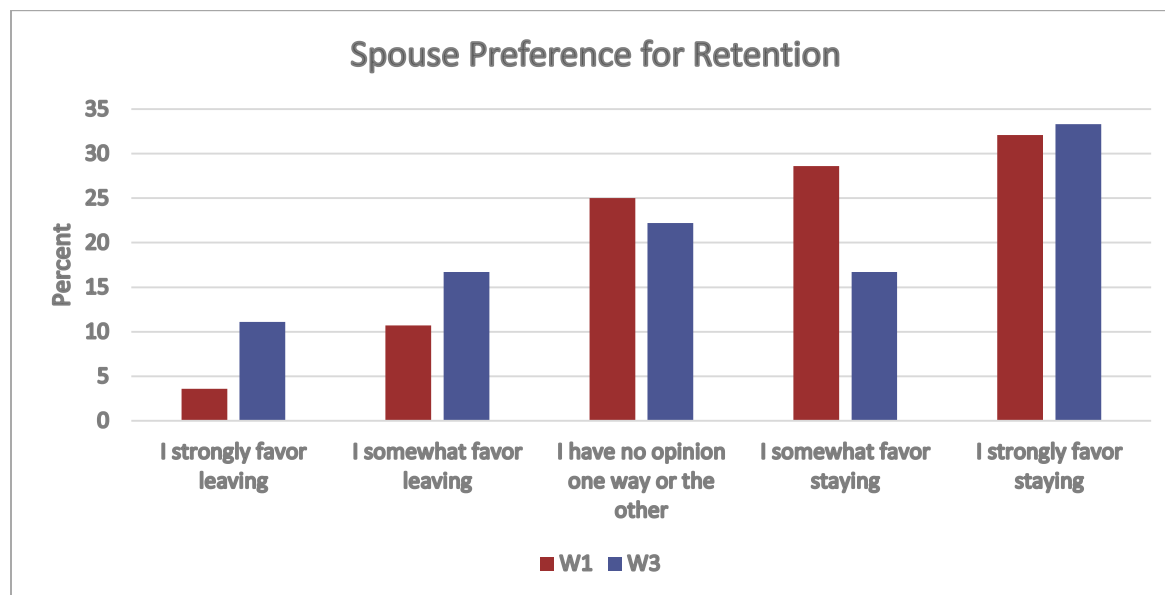
Takeaway
Satisfaction with the military life was high, yet most items decreased slightly over time. Preference for retention decreased slightly over time. At Wave 1, 61% (n=17) favored staying in the military, and, at Wave 3, 50% (n=9) somewhat or strongly favored staying in the military. Further analysis revealed no significant differences between spouse job status and job satisfaction and spouse preference for retention.

Further Analyses of Prospective Data

Due to small sample sizes, further analyses of the prospective data were limited in terms of utilizing inferential statistics to understand more about how participation in the ERP impacts employment-related outcomes. For example, the sample size of those who received a job at Wave 2 and Wave 3 was too small to conduct additional analyses related to job status. Only three people received a new employment opportunity at Wave 2 and four people at Wave 3. To provide a more comprehensive look at ERP, demographic and outcome variables were used to see if there were any differences between different types of users or services.

Differences between Service members and spouses. In an examination of Service members in comparison to spouses at Wave 1, Service members were much more likely to use resume writing services (93% n=13 of Service members compared to only 57% of spouses n=20), announcements of job openings (29% n=4 of Service members compared to 14% n=5 of spouses), and job fairs (43% n=5 of Service members compared to 20% of spouses n=6). At Wave 3, Service members were still more likely to use resume writing services (29% n=4 of Service members compared to 11% n=4 of spouses). Service members also reported using job-

search orientation (14% n=2 of Service members compared to 6% n=2 of spouses), job interview services (14% n=2 of Service members compared to 6% n=2 of spouses), job-search support group (14% n=2 of Service members compared to 3% n=1 of spouses), announcements of job openings (29% n=4 of Service members compared to 6% n=2 of spouses), and job fairs (29% n=4 of Service members compared to 9% n=3 of spouses). These differences between Service member and spouse ERP usage should be interpreted with caution as they may be an artifact of sample proportion between the two groups rather than true differences.

At Wave 1, spouses (52% n=14) were more likely than Service members (36% n=5) to report higher job-search confidence in interviewing. At Wave 3, these numbers were fairly equal. 78% (n=7) of Service members were confident in their interview skills compared to 73% (n=16) of spouses. At Wave 1, 58% (n=4) of spouses reported being "very satisfied" with the extent that their job utilized their knowledge, skills, and abilities compared to only 25% (n=1) of Service members. At Wave 3, 80% (n=8) of spouses reported being "very satisfied" with the extent that their job utilized their knowledge, skills, and abilities compared to 50% (n=1) of Service members. In regard to military satisfaction, at Wave 1, almost 80% (n=11) of Service members were satisfied with how the military supports their family, while only 53% (n=18) of spouses were satisfied. At Wave 3, 89% (n=8) of Service members were satisfied with how the military supports their family, while only 61% (n=14) of spouses were satisfied.

Differences between employment status. In an examination of characteristics by employment status at Wave 1, 40% (n=2) of those who were not working or looking for work were most likely to want to work for long-term savings over other reasons like paying bills or personal fulfillment. For the 67% of those who were seeking work, the most important reason for working was paying bills. Seventy-five percent (n=9) of those who were working full time indicated their most important reason for working was to pay bills. Seventy-four percent (n=14) of those who were seeking work were much more likely to indicate they were using ERP for the first time in the last year. Among those employed full time, 33% (n=4) had used ERP for the first time within the last year, 33% had used ERP 1 to 2 years ago, 25% (n=3) had used ERP 6 to 10 years ago, and 8% (n=1) had used ERP more than 10 years ago. Job seekers reported less ERP service use than those who were employed full time. Thirty-seven percent (n=7) of job seekers only used one ERP service. However, half of full-time employed (n=6) job seekers reported using three to four services. At Wave 3, job seekers were more likely to report using more services than those who were employed full time. Eighty-three percent (n=6) of job seekers used between two and seven ERP services, while 100% of those employed full time (n=4) reported using only one to two services.

At Wave 1, those seeking work reported a mean job-search self-efficacy score of 3.2 (sd=.86), and those working full time reported a mean job-search skill score of 3.4 (sd=1.1). Both job seekers and full-time workers had a higher mean than those working part time (2.9 sd=.59). Those not working or seeking work reported a mean job-search self-efficacy of 3.0 (sd=.27). At Wave 3, those seeking work reported roughly equal means in their job-search skills (3.3 sd=.69) with those who were employed full time (3.3 sd=.85), and both job seekers and full-time workers had a higher mean than those working part time (2.8 sd=1.4). Those not working or seeking work reported a mean job-search self-efficacy of 1.8 (sd=2.0). At Wave 1, full-time workers were more satisfied (3.6 sd=1.1) than part-time workers (2.9 sd=.58). At Wave 3, full-time workers were only slightly more satisfied (3.4 sd=.90) than part-time workers (3.3 sd=.72).

Differences in military satisfaction based on employment. A one-way ANOVA was used to examine differences in military satisfaction based on employment status at each wave and between waves. No relationship was found between employment status and military satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction

Differences based on ERP service usage. One-way ANOVAs were used to compare if there were differences in job satisfaction based on the number of ERP services used or the specific services used between waves. Categorical variables were created to examine the total number of services used. For the number of services used, two separate analyses were run. The first analysis examined the difference between using one ERP service and multiple ERP services. The second analysis examined the differences among three categories of service use (i.e., one to three services, four to six services, and seven to ten services). There was no significant difference between number of services used, or among the top three services used (i.e., resume writing, announcements of job openings, and job fair usage), and job satisfaction. A one-way ANOVA was also used to look at using ERP for "help deciding what kind of work to do" as one might expect that to be related to job satisfaction. However, no relationship was found.

Differences based on motivation for working. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare if there were differences in "job satisfaction-based motivation for working." There was no significant difference between reasons for working and job satisfaction.

Takeaways
- Spouses reported more satisfaction with their jobs than Service members did.
- Service members reported being more satisfied with the military than spouses.
- Those employed full time are using more services and are more likely to report having used ERP at other duty stations.
- Job-search self-efficacy seemed to increase among job seekers and those who were working full time in comparison to part time workers and those who were not seeking work.
- No differences were noted between job satisfaction and ERP service usage or reason for working or between employment status and military satisfaction.

Telephonic Interviews

Methods

Only spouse respondents were selected for the telephonic interviews. Spouses who met specific criteria for variation (e.g., location, participation in certain ERP services, job status, perceived experience using ERP) were prioritized for telephonic interviews. As prioritized spouses declined to be interviewed (i.e., did not respond to requests to schedule an interview, failed to be available for scheduled interviews), spouses who were willing and available became the common denominator for the sample. For the purposes of identifying broad themes, both the retrospective and prospective samples were combined in this analysis for a total sample of 27 respondents; however, each sample will be discussed separately.

The phone interviews took place between October 14 – November 27, 2019. The Clearinghouse employed an active duty Army spouse to conduct the majority of the interviews using a question guide. The questions asked were similar to those asked in the online surveys, except the telephonic interviews were used to garner more in-depth knowledge of responses. For example, via the telephonic interviews, the Clearinghouse discovered that the majority of the resume writing classes that respondents had participated in were specific for the Federal jobs' application process. The question list is available in Appendix D.

Respondents called in to a secure telephone number that was scheduled and provided by the Clearinghouse that allowed for the Zoom software platform to record the conversation; all participants verbally consented to participation and to being recorded. Written transcripts were then produced via Zoom, were cleaned by staff, and were coded using NVivo analytic software. Using NVivo, a preliminary coding structure was created, tested, and refined until a consistent coding structure was developed (e.g., adding codes for new themes that emerged and eliminating or collapsing codes for themes that were not supported by the data). One person conducted the coding two times - first to identify all possible codes and second to ensure precise and consistent analysis of the identified themes. A full coding structure of all items is listed in Appendix E.

Not all questions applied to all individuals (i.e., if a respondent indicated that they were not working, they would not be asked about job satisfaction). For some questions, respondents selected more than one answer (e.g., which services did you use), and, thus, not all responses can be assigned percentages. Because each conversation varied according to the respondent's experiences, calculating precise frequencies for the codes was not productive; rather, comprehensive themes that emerged from the combined pool of interviews are explored in this section. Ultimately, the discussion of the findings from the interviews is limited to include broad categories in order to portray an accurate accounting of the participants' responses. Quotations that best address themes of interest were selected and provided in the analysis below.

Retrospective Sample

Response Rate
In the online survey, all retrospective participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up telephone interview. Of the 222 respondents, 137 (62%) indicated their willingness and provided their email and telephone contact information. Of these, only spouses (n=126) were targeted for the telephone interviews as they comprised the majority of those (92%) who provided their contact information and made up the majority (61%) of the overall retrospective sample. To achieve a 20% response rate among spouses, 25 of the 126 spouses were selected to be invited to complete a telephone interview. An initial 25 spouses were selected, based upon review of their online data, to ensure spouses who had positive, negative, and mixed experiences with the program were represented. These spouses were contacted a minimum of three times with invitations to participate, and, if spouses were non-responsive, other spouses were selected to achieve the targeted saturation rate (25 spouses). Ultimately, 20 spouses (80% of the targeted sample) completed interviews.

Results

For services used (n=20), 12 spouses mentioned using the Federal jobs resume writing class, 10 mentioned using general resume writing and or/one-on-one assistance or a mixture of both, seven mentioned using the job postings or job boards, and five mentioned using career or job fairs.

For number of locations used (n=19), 11 spouses used the ERP at only one location, and eight used the ERP at more than one location.

For current employment status (n=20), 12 spouses were currently employed, one was not employed but looking for employment, two were not employed and not currently looking for work and five had unclear/mixed answers.

For received a job offer as a result of using the ERP (n=14), five received job offers, five had not received a job offer, and two had received a referral for a federal job or had received an interview. One spouse describes her experience, "Like I said, their attention to detail and like just attention when it came to following up. They really helped every step of the way, from beginning to end. And for that reason, because of their help. I was able to actually get a job offer. Whereas before, like I would send in 50-60-80 resumes on USA Jobs and I couldn't even get through the computer screening portion." Alternatively, a spouse who did not find a job by using ERP services commented, "Well, at the time I was using them. I was looking for work, um, yeah, I just found it a little easier over time to just go into the mainstream public to find employment. So that's what I did."

For job satisfaction (n=20), six were satisfied with their current jobs, three were not satisfied, four reported that they were underemployed, two were somewhat satisfied, and five had unclear or Not Applicable answers. One respondent described her experience, "They did tell me like what I can put on my resume my -my civilian one, and what I shouldn't bother even putting on, but other than that, I don't really think it was that helpful for me personally because I didn't end up finding a job in my area or anything that would utilize, like what I was working for, that would help me with my bachelor's, I didn't find it, I'm honestly, I'm doing the same thing I did before I started college and graduated college so-but I mean at least I have a job. So there's that." Another spouse discussed a positive alignment between her education and career, "There is a lot of overlap with my skills and it matches my education and experiences. My education is in psychology and my master's degree will be in human relations. I don't feel underemployed. I might when I get my master's degree. Also, I came over with the expectation of not working, but I didn't put a limit on what I wanted to do. I just wanted to work."

For preference for service delivery method (n=19), nine spouses preferred in-person, nine preferred a mixture of in-person and online, and one preferred online only.

For how they learned about the program (n=20), four spouses reported they learned from a friend or non-spouse family member, three learned from a newcomer orientation, two learned from their Service member spouse, two learned from other military spouses, one learned from a flyer, one learned from a referral from SFL-TAP, one learned from a Family Readiness Group (FRG), one learned from another ACS program, and five could not remember or were unsure.

For use of other employment services (n=17), eight spouses had used other employment services, eight had not used other employment services, and one was not sure.

For unintended (positive) consequences from using the ERP (n=17), two spouses mentioned expansion of professional network, two mentioned expansion of social network, four mentioned learning about other ACS or military services, and nine said there were no unintended consequences. One respondent recollected, "Well, it definitely helped with networking as well because they also inquired about moving on base, and so they also were able to get in touch with people they knew that worked on (unknown), they worked together and even though they couldn't answer all my questions they could find people who could - so it definitely helps with like networking."

For importance of staff credentials (n=12), four spouses reported they were important, four stated they were not as important as other factors (e.g., positive attitude, experience), and four were unsure.

For attended classes with Service members (n=13), eight spouses said they were in classes with Service members, two said there were no Service members in their classes, and three were not sure.

For need for spouse-specific content (n=17), 11 spouses said it is needed, four said it was not needed, and two were not sure how they felt. Feedback pertaining to the need for spouse-specific content included, "I mean, I think that would be useful, because a lot of the lingo, a lot of the stuff he was referring to was like stuff that I didn't understand. And he would say, assuming that I would, because of us all being military people, and it was like, stuff like the government pay system. He was like, oh, if you're a sergeant major that you qualify for G9 and when you search, you gotta go for like G, the pay grade thing. And I was like, I don't understand what that means." Another spouse echoed this concern, "In spouses, you see a lot of unemployment, they may take time off to deal with their kids, you know, they're in a much different situation than the soldier and the soldier needs personalized time for trying to talk infantry terminology in transferring that into, you know, a civilian –a civilian resume versus the spouse who needs to figure out how to tie in the time gaps. You know, I think, then you're just, you're just boring people when you could hone in on more specialized terminology and stuff like that. That would have taken a lot longer and somebody would have been annoyed and like -why am I here?"

For financial problems (n=20), note the question was not phrased to inquire about financial problems within the past year as it was in the online survey; thus, some respondents spoke about problems that they had experienced in the past. Eight had not experienced any problems, four had some problems or had problems at some point, five had experienced problems, and three gave unclear answers. Some salient responses included, "Yes, when my husband first joined. We had my son. We actually weren't able to get WIC (Women, Infants and Children) but because he was deploying his money was going to fluctuate, and that put us right over the curve. So we actually never got advantages from WIC because he was deploying so shortly after my son was born. But we did look into that and I think there was different times where we, in the early years, where we had to get like pay advances for moves and stuff like that because of expenses that came up that didn't fit in with our paycheck to paycheck lifestyle."

For spouse preference to stay in the military (n=20), eight spouses had no preference, two encouraged their spouse to stay in the military, two wanted their spouses to leave, three had some or mixed feelings, and five mentioned that their preference would be affected by the location of their next PCS. One respondent recalled, "Yes, it definitely impacts my preference for my spouse to be in the military here because it does create a strain on your own personal goals when you have to constantly rearrange your careers or your employment to suit the needs of the soldier, the Service member that active duty military, whether they are deploying - doing fill operations or just working long hours on different types of missions that come up on a regular basis. I think it's completely unfair that they don't allow Service members enough time to help accommodate their civilian spouses with civilian jobs." Another spouse echoed a similar sentiment, "Oh well, I can't wait for my spouse to come home and tell me we have to move so my professional aspirations (illegible), and so I guess location really affects me being in my field as well. So pretty much, I'm just trying to find a job until it's over and in the meantime, until we could probably move to a better location where I could get back in my industry."

Table 19

Likes or Positives about the ERP

Characteristic	Number of respondents who mentioned this
Staff knowledge about Federal Jobs processes	10
Staff general knowledge of employment processes	6
Staff general helpfulness (e.g., help to build confidence)	5
Staff availability (e.g., responsiveness, answers phone and email)	4
Staff knowledge about military-specific employment issues/processes/relatable staff	4
Services are free/no commitment	2
Broad assortment of services	2
Staff positive attitude	2
Staff trustworthy	2

Program targeted to military families	2
Resume assistance services	1
Location, accessibility, facility	2
Child care services	1
Computer and technology resources	1
Military spouse-specific services	1

Excerpts from the interviews with salient feedback regarding some of the most commonly discussed positive attributes of the program are presented below.

Federal jobs offerings
Many respondents mentioned the federal jobs classes when asked about likes or positives of the service use. Another spouse described the way that she recommends the program, "I like, well you know, basically that we have it available for spouses and I always recommend it to everybody, actually. Especially once people found out that I was successful in the search for a job, but I was recommending it even before when young spouses are PCSing, or they're just starting. You know, when they are starting their military career. I think is very helpful because even though I always worked, I had no idea what the federal resume looks like or what exactly the steps you need to take to get a job." Another respondent noted, "The program here is just absolutely great. Like I said, their attention to detail and like just attention when it came to following up. They really helped every step of the way, from beginning to end. And for that reason, because of their help. I was able to actually get a job offer. Whereas before, like I would send in 50-60-80 resumes on USA Jobs and I couldn't even get through the computer screening portion."

Military experience or understanding
Many respondents noted that the program staff's experience with the military was a benefit, "He helped settle-my mind at ease, kind of saying (he kind of said) I've changed stuff and jumped off that ledge, a couple of times too, you know, so I trusted him and his suggestions and because of that, because he's been in a similar position —so, he knows and so instead of me reading through 400 things he was able to pinpoint, you know what, this would be good for you, you know? So the fact that he knew it well enough to be like, hey, you know, this would work for you, without me having to read through those."

Staff dedication

Another respondent spoke about a staff member's willingness to go what she believed was above and beyond, "Just the fact that he was willing to literally take my resume and, you know, rip it apart, per se, and really tell me you know what to do, what not to do. He was very thorough, you know, I really like the fact that he actually cared about people getting a job. I think that really sets it apart, just that having someone here that's willing to go the extra mile." An FRG leader described the importance of the ERP, "Being an FRG leader, it puts you in a unique position to be able to think about all of those, all the different programs and services that ACS offers. And the ERP is certainly a huge offering that ACS has because as military spouses, we change jobs so much that utilizing that ERP is highly beneficial when you move to new area and the first thing we can do is get linked up (inaudible)–that's just my opinion."

Table 20
Recommendations for Improvement/Dislikes about the Program

Characteristic	Number of times mentioned
Program needs more available staff (e.g., to return phone calls, emails)	5
In need of more marketing/advertising	4
Staff should be more knowledgeable/qualified about general employment services/processes	4
Create more tailored content for younger generations (i.e., those just starting in the work force, entry level jobs)	3
Improve (e.g., organize, use key word search filters) digital job postings	3
Improve physical job postings (i.e., job board)	2
Create more tailored content for professionals	2
Offer more follow-up (e.g., phone, email)	2
Federal jobs class is confusing, too much content, overwhelming	1
Staff should be more networked to local employment resources	1
Staff need to improve attitude	1

Excerpts from the interviews with salient feedback regarding some of the most commonly discussed negative attributes or areas where the program could improve are presented below.

Need for more tailored content
Several respondents stressed the need for content that is, specifically, geared to spouses who are new to the military and are interested in entry-level positions and also include content that is geared to those who are established or have professional-level careers. One respondent stated, "But to be honest, and I am not sure if I mentioned this in the previous survey that I did, it was

more geared towards spouses who are looking for, like, certification or just kind of looking for, I don't want to say low level jobs because when I was there I explained that, you know, I have a master's degree. I'm a certified teacher, and if there was anything that was available to me on, you know, on that level, and I was even looking to go back to school to get a doctorate, and they were kind of like, you know, you are accomplished. So we pretty much can't do anything more for you." Another respondent described, "I don't want to be stereotypical, I think most of the wives that come in, they're, you know, stay at home moms or they're just now looking to go to school. So they have these courses and they're like, oh, if you want to do a course here to get certified, and if you want to go do a bachelor's degree —this is great for you, but for spouses, like myself, there aren't enough opportunities for us with further education. …he was even mentioning working at like a call center or something of that nature. And I was saying to him, you know, I'm a certified teacher. I was kind of looking for something more, you know up my alley."

Need for better or increased advertising and promotion
Many respondents mentioned that the program needs to be advertised or marketed better, "Yeah, I feel like there's a lack of knowledge. I mean, I, we've been in the military for eight years, and up until (current installation), you know, I really didn't pursue ACS and so I guess I just, it was only because a friend told me about this CPAC program that they told me to go to ACS as part of my checklist thing, you know, but I just didn't know you know and so, I don't know, trying to get the word out a little more about what ACS has to offer would probably, you know, be a help at least." Another spouse mentioned, "I mean especially social media, I mean, you know, people get on those wives' pages and it can be for the better, or for the worse, but a lot of information does get out that way. And so I feel if there was more promptness about getting you know information out to the spouse pages in the area, that it could be, you know, a big encouragement for people to come in because I know tons of wives that want to work, they just kind of don't know how to go about it." A spouse who has worked for ACS commented, "I feel like there are better opportunities to be advertised and connections within the community to be able to help some of the younger spouses. There should be more information on developing skills. We have a younger population and they don't have the skills to job hunt. They don't know how to get to resources and we could do better at giving them that service. There are some resources that are limited within our area. We don't have anyone to market either. We are going through MWR marking and don't have anybody specifically for ACS." Another spouse mentioned, "There is a lot they need to do to get the word out. No one knows they exist. I recently put in an ICE comment and the link being put out wasn't right so I had to put a comment in to get the link changed and the link with the job information was the wrong link."

The evaluation team heard this perspective from the staff side also. The staff stated they did the best marketing they could with limited resources. One spouse provided a telling description of the issue, "I think just trying to get that information down to some of the, I mean as a senior spouse right now I- I know my junior spouses and the enlisted spouses. It's like they - they talk all the time about how there's no jobs or they can't get a job and stuff like that, and they know of the program. I just don't know why a lot of them won't kind of go in, don't know if it's just laziness and they're just talk. It's all talk or - I wish I had a solution for you. But I do know like I hear it all the time. 'How do I get a job as a military spouse- how do I get a job as a military spouse?'

General negative experiences

A few spouses had an overall negative experience with the program, "Um, well it just didn't work for me. So I just don't really have any, you know, very positive things to say about it. I'm sure that it has worked for others maybe, but for me, it just, I don't know. It was almost like a waste of time —it just did not work." When pressed further, this respondent was also talking about the spousal-preference program and her overall experience was that neither the ERP nor the spousal-preference program had helped her. She continued "I had to go outside into the mainstream, you know, and get a job. You know, like off post or a nongovernment type job, you know. I'm sure it's helped others, so I'm not, you know, I'm sure it's helped others." Echoing this general dissatisfaction, another spouse stated, "I do not believe the services offered here were of any benefit to me at all. The employee running the classes has no idea what he is doing, and information is outdated. The only information I receive that is beneficial are the emails with job opportunities."

Other barriers to employment
Although the telephonic interview questions did not specifically address other barriers to spouse employment, the topic came up in several interviews. One of the more common barriers mentioned was access to child care. One respondent described her predicament, "Um, maybe he did mention there was like a federal resume workshop and I wanted to go to it so I could apply for jobs on USA Jobs, but he said that children weren't allowed and my husband is active duty. Obviously so, I was not necessarily going to leave my kid with a random person, so I couldn't go to the federal resume workshop- that was frustrating. So I wish that there was like an online like a live video or something like that I could have seen it from home." Another spouse said, "There's so many crazy things that can come up that spouses need the assistance with – even if it's not directly from the employment readiness, it's an ignored aspect of it, if a spouse doesn't have child care then that spouse can't work. So it's kind of a no brainer when it's said like that, but yeah. But Child and Youth Services (CYS) has a waitlist every station I've ever been to."

These challenges appear to be even more difficult to navigate at OCONUS installations. One spouse recalled, "Getting registered over here was a nightmare. I was doing some contract freelance lawyer work and took a little bit of time off in the states. Not much, because I wanted to keep my client, right? But the day we arrived in Korea, I went to see why I had to do brand new paperwork, brand new health assessments from the doctors, I had just done it within the last two weeks. I mean, I had the package for both kids ready to go. At the very least, I wanted to get them in hourly, and I just needed to work 10 hours a week to make sure my client stayed with me and all that. And I show up the day we land in Korea after 46 hours of travel because the Army did not make that part easy on us and they said, 'Well, maybe we can get you in in two weeks for an appointment, but we're doing you a favor by putting you in that quick.' And, that's just to register my kid — that's not a start date." Another spouse discussed some of the other benefits of working, "You know when you move to a new place, you can't start working or immediately start to meet people. You understand that, you know, you learn about the community easier when you start networking more- it's just easier. You know, then what happens so often when we move is our, our spouse, you know, we get to a new place, we've got our house or apartment or wherever we're living and we get our household goods and we start unpacking. And then the next day our spouse goes to work and we're stuck in the house with boxes and kids and pets and we don't know anybody and, you don't even, it's sort of overwhelming and I know so often we kind of joke with our spouses like you know you've got the easy part, because you get to walk right into a job, you know, and you instantly sort of start making friendships and start being busy, you know, doing

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something productive where we're sort of like how are we going to entertain these kids. We don't know our way around. We don't have babysitters while we got to unpack, you know, all that kind of stuff. So I think as spouses are employed more and more, and it's easier, that takes that much of the stress off all these changes."

Prospective Sample

Response Rate
In the online survey, all prospective participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up telephone interview. Of the 54 respondents who completed the Wave 1 surveys, 34 (64%) indicated their willingness and provided their emails and telephone contact information. Of these, only spouses (n=17, 50%) were targeted for the telephone interviews. Due to the small sample size, a 40% saturation rate was targeted; thus, all 17 spouses were invited in staggered recruitment efforts to complete a telephone interview. Ultimately, seven spouses completed interviews (41%).

Results
For the service used (n=7), six respondents mentioned using the Federal jobs resume writing class and /or one-on-one services, five used the general resume writing services and/or one-on-one services, two used the career fairs, and one used the ERP center services (e.g., computers, printers).

For the number of locations that the ERP is used (n=7), five respondents used the ERP at only one location, one at more than one location, and one was not sure.

For current employment status (n=7), four respondents were currently employed, and three were not employed but looking for employment.

For received a job offer as a result of using ERP (n=3), one respondent had not received a job, one had received a referral for a federal job, and one had received a job interview. One respondent noted, "No, but I had been applying for jobs, quite a few jobs and I was not getting referred, I didn't understand why, when the ERP made those changes, it seemed like I was being referred every single time I submitted that application."

For job satisfaction (n=5), one respondent was satisfied with his or her current job, two were somewhat satisfied, and two reported that they were underemployed.

For preference for service delivery method (n=6), five respondents preferred in-person, and one preferred a mixture of in-person and online.

For how they learned about the program (n=7), two respondents learned from a referral from SFL-TAP, one learned from another ACS program, two learned from email, and two learned from newcomer orientation.

For use of other employment services (n=5), three respondents had used other employment services, one had not, and one was not sure.

For unintended (positive) consequences from using the ERP (n=7), three mentioned learning about other ACS or military services, three reported no unintended consequences, and one mentioned, "a rude interaction with the advisor." One respondent recalled learning about another ACS service and said, "They have been really good to me as, as I said, you know they're- they're able to help with my resume. So that was getting me referred, which I hadn't in a while, as well as – I'd spoken to them because they do have a loan closet to help get professional clothing for those that don't have it, and they've actually opened it up. I work with a lot of witnesses and a lot of them do show up to court and not in professional attire. So they were more than willing to open up those closets for us as well. So I think they do a great job with-for the community."

For the importance of staff credentials (n=7), five respondents reported they were important, one wasn't sure, and one reported that she does value credentials but values customer service more.

For attended classes with Service members (n=5), two respondents said they were in classes with Service members, two said there were no Service members in their classes, and one mentioned, "I noticed that they had a senior class and a junior class and that referred to how many years of service that the soldier was — they had split that up to tailor it to those, to that population, I did notice they did that."

For need for spouse specific content (n=5), three respondents said it was needed, and two said it was not needed.

For financial problems (n=7), one respondent said she had experienced problems, four said they had not, and two said they had some financial problems or had had problems at some point. One respondent remarked, "Struggles, yes, but no different than other military families. We struggle during PCS, pay is not enough and we struggle to make ends meet. We both had savings before we married and both have to use it monthly to pay expenses. Student loans are expensive."

For spouse preference to stay in the military (n=4), one respondent had no preference; one had some or mixed feelings; and two were married to retiring spouses, so the question did not apply.

For positives about the ERP, three respondents liked that staff had knowledge about federal jobs processes, two liked the broad assortment of services, one liked the staff's positive attitude, one liked the career fair, and one liked the job postings for available positions. Regarding the staff's helpfulness, one respondent remarked, "They want to help. They want to help us out there. They don't want us to feel like, you know, we're here and there's not opportunities for us available. They want to give us all the opportunities and resources there are to get us going somewhere in some field. So we're, we're not just hanging around." Another mentioned, "This is the first time, and really, my husband's been in for 17 years -18 years and this is the first time I really took advantage of the whole program. I wish I would have done it a lot earlier. So I would have had a feeling of what I can expect, you know, more or less, or not to expect. Or how I could help others. Other spouses than that need help, or advice." Another respondent described, "What the ERP does- it does offer some peace of mind. If you've got to stay up here, for whatever reason, like I have a senior in high school, so I'm not moving in the middle of his senior year, so I'm staying here. I've

got peace of mind knowing that I can get on that spreadsheet of available jobs. I can go to their job fair and kind of put myself at ease of hey, how am I going to make money for my family? That's to me what the ERP offers, and ACS, I'll just say ACS. I know they're there."

For recommendations for improvement/dislikes about the program, three respondents stated the need for more marketing/advertising, two reported no improvements were needed, one said that services available outside of working hours were needed, one mentioned the need for a mentoring program, one mentioned the need for more tailored content for professionals, one wanted more follow-up from staff, one said that staff need to improve their attitudes, one mentioned that the program needs more staff in general, and one wanted to see more access to virtual/remote jobs. With regard to advertising, one respondent summarized, "Just advertise the program better, and when they do the ACS briefing to soldiers transitioning out — that's their time to shine. So having someone that is, that's been in that situation, and that can relate to the situation is definitely going to enhance the effectiveness of these programs."

Noting a need for services to be offered outside of work hours, one respondent noted, "It is a great program for a lot of spouses. A lot of my friends said that their spouses have gone to it and use it when they've just gotten to this installation and are looking for another job. So it's been good for them because they weren't working, but when you are working full time, you don't always get the opportunity to just walk into the office in the middle day." With regard to the need for more staff and more follow up from staff, one respondent noted, "Like I said, they didn't have very many people doing the program and then when they did, sometimes they were out a lot. So they weren't flexible with working with people." Also pertaining to selecting the right staff, another respondent stated, "Hiring the right people; finding ways to do more; make ERP known to spouses by putting out business cards at DEERS or ACS. More networking necessary and promotional things." The one respondent who had an overall negative experience reported, "The service was horrible and I would not return. Not surprising, but the gentleman never followed up with me like he was supposed to."

Conclusions

Most of the spouse respondents were satisfied with the program and stated that it had helped them in some way. The topics of the conversations revolved around the theme of the well-known challenges associated with military life, such as frequent PCS moves, that do not support spouses having long-term career growth and development opportunities. Regarding suggestions for program improvements, most respondents reported that the program needed to be advertised and staffed more adequately.

Site Visits

Four garrisons were selected for site visits, in part, because ACS staff at these garrisons were participating in a concurrent effort by the Clearinghouse to conduct a process evaluation for the ACS Family Advocacy Program (FAP). Thus, garrisons that had provided all of the requested information needed for the FAP evaluation and were also participating in the ERP evaluation were further selected by availability of resources (i.e., staff time and existing limitations), location (i.e., CONUS or OCONUS), command, and size. The evaluation team and the Army headquarter staff advocated to include at least one OCONUS garrison due to the unique role that ACS plays

overseas. Thus, USAG Bavaria, with its two primary locations and two satellite locations, and, due to proximity, USAG Wiesbaden were chosen. For CONUS representation, Fort Meade and Fort Drum were selected.

The site visits were conducted between January 30, 2020 – April 1, 2020. At each site, interviews were conducted with PMs and, when possible, support staff (e.g., program volunteers) and program participants. In addition to interviews, one Federal resume writing class was observed. To maximize anonymity, only the numbers of people interviewed at each location are detailed below.

Note, Fort Drum presented a unique situation as the garrison commander ordered an infrastructure change that impacted both ERP and FAP. These programs were moved from the administration of the Army Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (Army MWR) to the Human Resources Directorate in November 2019. The new program leadership requested the previously scheduled site visits to be conducted in the summer of 2020 to allow time for adaptation. However, since the project could not accommodate a lengthier timeline, the Clearinghouse evaluators, instead, conducted telephonic interviews with the former ACS program staff who remained the same under the new program leadership. Given that the leadership restructure at Fort Drum is not duplicated anywhere else within the Army, the focus of the interviews became how the change impacted the programs, and the results of the interviews are described separately below.

Table 21

Site Visit Participation

Date	Site Visited	Number of ERP Interviews Conducted
January 30 & 31	USAG Wiesbaden	2
February 5 - 8	USAG Bavaria (Rose Barracks, Tower Barracks, Garmisch, Hoehnfels)	3
February 18	Fort Meade	2
March 15-April 1	Fort Drum (telephonic)	2

The information garnered from the site visits was used to provide contextual perspective to better inform the overall evaluation findings. Themes and quotations from the site visits are interwoven throughout this section. The primary goals were to (1) understand the on-the-ground implementation of the program and identify variations in programs between the selected garrisons, (2) provide contextual understanding of program climate during the evaluation period (e.g., staffing, unique program limitations or assets), and (3) enhance program improvement recommendations. Although the questions asked varied by respondent type (i.e., not all questions

are appropriate for all respondents), the Clearinghouse evaluators centered on the following implementation topics:

- the referral processes (e.g., how program participants enter the program);
- how ERP interfaces with other ACS programs, such as the Army Volunteer Program (AVP);
- marketing plans and solutions to marketing barriers or challenges;
- barriers to reach;
- unique assets and constraints associated with the target population served at each garrison;
- how program decisions are guided by needs assessment, command, and community involvement;
- how program content is selected or created;
- variations in implementation strategies;
- identify potential opportunities for continuous quality improvement efforts; and
- identify current data-collection strategies (e.g., specific outcomes of services that are being measured).

Site Visit Themes

Program Referral Process

As with most ACS programs, participation in the ERP is voluntary and free for all parties, and delivery of the programs ranges from scheduled weekly, biweekly, monthly, or quarterly classes to on-demand, walk-in services. One OCONUS respondent noted that most of the people who come in for assistance have learned about the program through the newcomer orientations on post or through their unit service coordinators, "People come to the monthly orientations to learn about how to ship packages, customs, working from home and virtual jobs; it's important and we get dozens of clients through this orientation, and most live on post, although most Service members are mission focused and they don't always share information with their spouses." Another OCONUS respondent noted, "Only a small percentage of people use ERP before arriving on post." Expectedly, most program participants are either currently searching for employment or soon to be searching. One ERP staff member noted, "Clients typically come in with an expectation for immediate help, for the most part, they are looking for a job now and need help now."

Outside of learning about the ERP through the orientation process and through other more traditional channels, such as flyers and advertised career fairs, as with most ACS programs, there were mixed reports of the effectiveness of using social media to advertise the program. One respondent reported that despite using Facebook to market the program, they have "limited access to it, due to IT security." One respondent noted maintaining a "Congratulations: You are Hired" board when he learned of any newly hired clients to document the successes that clients have finding employment. He touted that this board helps to illustrate a positive reminder to anyone walking into the ACS that "there are jobs available here."

Service Delivery

As with all ACS programs, most of the offerings are needs based and dependent upon the unique garrison population; however, there did appear to be some similarities in core program offerings. For instance, resume writing, federal resume writing and federal job-search classes, interview skills, and dress for success were mentioned at all of the sites visited. The frequency of each class depended upon the location. One OCONUS respondent noted, "We can't fill up a class here so a lot of work is one-on-one." At an OCONUS site, a PM echoed this sentiment, "We don't turn people away, we are constantly changing things to meet people's needs, we get a lot of walk-ins and referrals." With regard to which format is best, the PM continued "One-on-one is most effective and we're doing more and more of that now, it's what works best here, but the classroom itself is also important for networking, we are thinking of offering a lunchtime series to help get people back in the classroom." The PM continued, "We recently did an outreach career café, it was literally at a café, though snacks are not provided, at the last one we discussed home-based businesses — we need to be innovative and think outside of the box, we can't hand people a MSEP pocket guide from the 1960's." Another example of a less conventional offering at this OCONUS site was the service of taking head-shot photographs that could be used on Linkedin. The PM noted that this also helped to attract participants. Some of the other more unique classes mentioned at one CONUS garrison included salary negotiation and how to utilize a job fair. Moreover, at an OCONUS site, a program for teens who were looking for summer work had been implemented. The common theme at each site visited was to offer classes as an introduction to the program and the targeted curriculum and to provide follow-up and one-on-one help as requested. Several respondents mentioned the importance of offering online classes through Youtube or via other platforms that record live trainings, such as Facebook live, to reach more people. One respondent noted the importance of offering online access to programming because, "People are computer savvy here." The benefits of offering online training opportunities are further discussed in the barriers to implementation section below.

Federal Jobs Search and Federal Resume Writing Classes

In support of the information gleaned from the telephone interviews, the importance of the federal jobs resume writing and federal jobs-search classes offered through the ERP was echoed throughout the site visits. At one OCONUS site, the evaluation team was able to observe a Federal resume writing class that had nine attendees and was comprised of spouses and Service members who had already been through the SFL-TAP program and needed more assistance. The importance of using keywords was discussed along with tips about language choice and matching the resume to the questionnaire. Volunteer experience was also discussed as a viable listing on a resume in application for a federal job if the experience equals at least 52 weeks of specialized experience. A website for translating military skills into civilian skills was also reviewed. After the class, the instructor offered appointments to provide one-on-one assistance to anyone who needed further help. The class was based upon Kathryn Troutman's "Ten Steps to a Federal Job" and "Federal Job Search" from the Federal Career Training Institute.

Other Frequently Used Services

Other program offerings that were discussed at all sites visited included the maintenance of job boards that are physically maintained in the office and as online job boards. One PM regularly takes jobs posted on USA jobs (e.g., federal jobs) and adds them to the local job board —she mentioned that this takes a significant amount of time for her to do on a biweekly basis. Another

important service, also required by AR included job or career fairs that must be offered biannually. The evaluation team repeatedly heard that the types of jobs most commonly encountered at a job fair are those that could be found at the local commissary, bowling alleys, Children and Youth Services, Exchange, or other service-sector jobs. One respondent advised spouses to not use their spousal preference for "a job at the food court" as it can only be used once per duty station. At many job fairs, hiring can be done on the spot. Outside of classes and job fairs, the technological resources that ERP typically maintains include a computer bank and printers that clients can use as needed. At one OCONUS site the PM noted, "Wifi is spotty and you can only go on to .mil sites"; thus, ERP is not considered an effective resource at this location since budget cuts in 2017 severely impacted this service. At another OCONUS site, computer labs were descried by a PM as, "popular and necessary."

Available Jobs

The types of jobs available were highly dependent upon the site visited. At one CONUS site within close proximity to a major metropolitan area, the PM described jobs as, "plentiful —most people want a government job here, there are lots of jobs in cybersecurity and STEM fields, in fact, they can't get jobs filled fast enough." However, individuals without the necessary training and credentials for these more highly skilled jobs, find procuring a government job still difficult. At this location, the ERP works closely with temporary jobs agencies, especially for individuals who have medical credentials. Although the PM noted, "If you have skills you can get a job here but you also have to remember the cost of living here is high."

At the other OCONUS sites visited, the available job pool looked much different. One PM recalled a former client stating, "I was making over 100k in the US and now I can't get a job for even 30K." The most commonly posted jobs included part-time bank jobs, jobs at the commissary or a nearby resort, and jobs offered through DMWR (e.g., CYS, bowling alley, hotel) and other nonappropriated fund positions. While there are some lower GS position jobs (e.g. GS6/GS7) that can be available, they often focus on computer data entry, and they fill very quickly. Some defense contractors hire spouses, and some companies hire a small number of local nationals. Further, GS positions are limited to terms of up to 5 years, so these jobs are not viewed as long-term positions. Due to these more unique circumstances, emphasis on volunteer work for shorter periods of time is highlighted as a productive way to keep work experience recent and skills fresh.

In Germany, specifically, there is a growing interest in and supportive services available to assist spouses in developing home-based businesses, such as baking, telework, cleaning services, photography services, and pet-based services. Germany has more relaxed labor laws than other countries with military bases (e.g., Italy, Turkey, Saudi Arabia), and spouses are allowed to work under the current status of armed forces agreement; however, they will pay high taxes on their earned income - around 40%.

An emphasis on virtual jobs for spouses is a recent trend that is gaining credence. At one of the OCONUS sites a virtual job fair has been hosted to help link clients to companies, such as Amazon, that do allow for some telework. At another OCONUS site, the PM notes that there are over 200 employers who have some flexibility, and they allow their workers to hold remote positions, such as medical assistant, nurses, and technical and customer support. He also noted, "MSEP lists 400 companies willing to do some remote work." As part of his program management,

he stresses the importance of "thinking outside of the box and reaching out to companies that offer remote work to participate in a virtual job fair." The PM was in the process of partnering with MSEP to offer a virtual job fair and was in the process of learning about "legal contracts, government approvals, video recording licenses, room and technology costs to be able to do this ourselves." The largest stumbling block mentioned was learning about the virtual software — "learning about who supports the platform, what tech skills are needed, how OSD's security team is involved and learning about what we can and cannot collect in terms of PI." He noted that being able to "upload a resume on the spot is a best practice for employment, but the current technology doesn't allow it — it's a security risk." He reported that this has been a 6-month or longer process to try to prepare for a virtual job fair that could serve as many as 800 people in 15 countries. He further reported, "Wright-Patterson has done one, so has Japan." Outside of MSEP partnership, SFL-TAP has also partnered to host these types of events. Another benefit to the virtual job fair model is that these "platforms generate metrics through tracking the number registered, along with when peak usage is observed— it can also provide options for follow-up and this is all important to start a job trail."

Other Program Benefits

At one site, a PM mentioned the importance of teaching clients to learn about their "soft skills and not just hard skills, which are also important to put on a resume." Networking was frequently mentioned as an important component of the program. One respondent described their role as, "knowing the right person, being the connector to the spokes of the wheel" and commented that sometimes what they do is, "life coaching — they can be their own worst enemy, they think they aren't qualified; most people are in the process of reinventing themselves." One OCONUS PM said, "I know all of the jobs available on post, and also serve as a link between this and other garrisons." Similarly, ERP managers serve as the links to the companies hiring and close connections are formed through the job fairs. One former volunteer spouse who was interviewed described her experience with the ERP, "I needed to network, I needed more confidence, self-esteem, I didn't have it, but with the support of ACS, I can push back to my spouse and say yes, I have been supporting you, and it's time for me to get some schooling now."

Partnerships

The importance of networking and partnership forming was emphasized at each site. Some partners frequently mentioned included MSEP, and one PM noted, "We talk once a month." Other ERP partners include SFL-TAP and Career Onestop, which is a paid resume-writing service and job bank. Another partner mentioned was Hiring Our Heroes. The importance of volunteering to prevent gaps in employment was emphasized, especially at the OCONUS sites where employment opportunities are more limited. At these sites, relying upon the ACS Army Volunteer Program to help match volunteers with opportunities was discussed as a productive partnership. One respondent mentioned a volunteer fair that is well represented by "19 agencies including the USO and Red Cross — it's well attended, we had over 200 people participate, mostly spouses, at our last one."

Gaps in Services & Barriers to Reach

As with any ACS program, services are designed to be tailored to the target population. At the OCONUS sites visited in Germany, the population using the program was described as, "younger, but higher ranking and it's mostly spouses, some Service members transitioning out, and some retirees, people like to retire here." At both CONUS and OCONUS locations, an increasing number of foreign-born spouses was noted by a PM, who estimated, "there's a trend that half of spouses are foreign-born now and it's a challenge — how do we articulate experience from Africa? In Africa, if you attended high school it's like going to 2-3 years of college here." A CONUS PM noted spouses who originate from South and Central America and Africa who do not speak English well are a population that may not be able to find employment. In Europe, spouses, who are not U.S. citizens and not from a European Union country (e.g. Hungary, Serbia), are not able to obtain a green card and are, thus, not able to work even if they speak German or English.

At an OCONUS location and a CONUS location, the installation and surrounding area were described as rural and somewhat isolated. In each case, one PM said, "Spouses can feel isolated with limited opportunities and it can be frustrating for them." There are limited services outside of the gates and barriers to employment, such as a lack of transportation services. One former volunteer for the ERP at an OCONUS site noted, "It's like an American island here, and we need more social cohesion." The community at one OCONUS site is small and "everyone knows everyone." An interesting result of this isolated community is that if and when someone does get a job, the ACS specialist there said "I know about it, because I see them."

The lack of available child care was another barrier to employment as well as use of employment services that was frequently mentioned during the site visits and telephone interviews. One PM also noted an overall need for spouses to be trained in basic office-skills, such as using Microsoft Office. An ACS staff member who was formerly a volunteer but now assists as a paid part-time staff member talked with the evaluation team and said, "I used to come here to get help, Navy services didn't help and I knew I needed to keep my skills fresh — my technical, computer and office skills, so I volunteered —there is a volunteer pool needed here." She further described her experience as a military spouse and stated, "we are resilient and optimistic, but as spouses we are on a perpetual wait list, and for employers they see us as a red flag and know we aren't going to be permanent."

Program and Metrics

All of the PMs who were interviewed expressed difficulty in tracking follow-up information from clients who had found employment. One PM noted that their "response rate from sending out an email to his client list-serv asking if anyone had found a job is about .5% — it's basically impossible to get feedback from clients or employers." One PM noted that those who had found a job were already moving on with their lives and their new jobs. At one location, a PM noted being able to track 73 individuals who had found jobs since the PM had started working for the program (i.e., during the course of just under a year).

In terms of whether clients are satisfied with the program, most of the PMs reported using ICE comments to help ascertain feedback after each class and noted, "if we receive any negative feedback we have 72 hours to address it." Another PM noted that ICE comments might range from satisfaction with the services received to the facility appearance, employee attitudes, timeliness, hours of service, and other comments. An additional metric that is tracked in CTS is

the number of referrals that were made. One PM noted modeling the program after a program that was perceived as successful at another installation and mentioned, "how attention was provided to clients, ERP was very passionate about what it was doing."

Program Staffing

At each CONUS location and at one of the OCONUS locations, the ERP had a designated PM and, at one site, paid part-time support staff. At the other OCONUS location, due to the multiple satellite locations where ACS's are not fully staffed, program generalists provide a range of ACS offerings including those associated with ERP, FAP, Relocation Readiness (RRP), and other services. The PMs interviewed had some credentials as either certified resume trainers or certified career counselors. One PM had previously worked for SFL-TAP. When questioned, none of the respondents mentioned the need for more program staff to help fulfil implementation expectations; all stated that the current staffing model was sufficient; although, one PM noted, "if we had more, we could do more" and referenced inadequate computer technology resources. In general, concern over implications of budget cuts was not an immediate issue, and this was especially so at the OCONUS locations where one respondent noted, "there are no other options here except SFL-TAP." Another respondent reported, confidently, about the future of the program and said, "spouse jobs are a hot topic for the Army and Command is very supportive of what we're doing."

Fort Drum Interviews

As previously described, during the evaluation period, a significant restructuring event occurred at Fort Drum Army Garrison. The oversight of the ERP and FAP changed from ACS, housed under the DFMWR, which is housed under IMCOM to the Army Directorate of Human Resources (DHR, or G1). This unexpected change impacted the site visits for the ERP and FAP as DHR leadership requested that the Clearinghouse site visits be postponed until the programs had become better established under the new directorate. Due to pre-existing delays, the evaluation team could not postpone the site visits by several months. As an alternative, the team conducted the critical components of the site visit agenda — interviews with key program staff — via telephone. This subsection details a summary of the information gleaned from the newly reorganized ERP alignment at Fort Drum.

Introduction to Fort Drum

Fort Drum Army Garrison is classified as a large (i.e., approximately 13,000) Readiness command installation located remotely. The closest small metro area is Watertown, New York, which has a population of 25,900 and is eight miles from the base. For Drum's closest larger metropolitan area is Syracuse, New York, which has a population of 142,000 and is located 90 miles from the base. The installation has a high operations tempo that consists of mostly light infantry Soldiers, so thousands of Service members are deployed throughout the world at any given time. The population is comprised of predominately first term, 18- to 24-year-old Soldiers who live approximately half on and half off base. The implications of these characteristics for the ERP are that, despite the large Army population, due to its remote location, jobs are more difficult to obtain than at many other large garrisons located closer to a major metropolitan area. Thus, spouses have more difficulty finding employment at Fort Drum.

The ownership restructuring, noted above, was designed to reduce redundancies in services offered across the installation. The summaries below detail the anticipated and "preliminary" results of the changes. For a more comprehensive assessment of how the changes impacted the programs, further investigation is recommended within 1 year from this oversight change.

Background
The telephone interviews were conducted between March 15 and April 1, 2020. The former ACS PMs were interviewed along with their newly appointed managers under the DHR. Under the restructure, the Transition Services Manager (TSM) who manages the SFL-TAP [6] replaced ACS as the reporting agency for the ERP. The SFL-TAP helps transitioning Service members discover the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to be competitive and successful in the global workforce. The program helps Soldiers make informed career decisions through counseling and employment assistance and by building upon lessons learned in the initial and service phases of the Soldier life cycle. The most prevalent themes pertaining to the leadership changes are presented below.

Perceived Positive Changes as a Result of the Restructure
Increased Program Reach
As a result of the restructuring, the reach of the ERP is anticipated to expand due to increased access to leadership (i.e., greater ability to reach Service members at the unit level) obtained from the "required participation" in the SFL-TAP program. When the ERP was aligned under ACS, it did not have direct access to units. Moreover, the SFL-TAP maintains a command roster and has direct access to the Soldier and Family Readiness Groups (SFRGs). SFRGs consist of a Soldier, spouse, and family group, and they work to ensure Army families have the information they need about many military life factors (e.g., how to use the commissary, how to find employment resources). The SFL-TAP also has a seat at the Community, Listening and Information Forum (CLIF) that meets regularly to discuss trending topics and address local issues. The restructure was described as better poised to use command to help promote the ERP as an additional resource after completion of the SFL-TAP (i.e., for more targeted needs, such as how to search for federal jobs) or as an important resource that Service members should refer their spouses to for employment assistance.

The ERP is currently experiencing an increase in participation as a result of the restructure under the SFL-TAP. One respondent noted that prior ACS ERP resume classes were typically attended by 6-10 individuals; however, there are now 8-15 participants per class. The restructure was described by one respondent as an attempt to provide a "one-stop shop" for employment resources.

Improved Location
A physical move was cited as a benefit of the restructure as the new location of the ERP has more visibility. The ERP is now in the same location as the SFL-TAP. Also housed within the same building are the DoL and the Veterans Administration (VA). One respondent noted, "Both of these

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[6] The SFL-TAP is a Commander's program that provides transition assistance services to eligible Soldiers with at least 180 or more continuous days of Title 10 active duty service, except for those in training status.

organizations also offer employment services to Service members and families and so this move contributes to the new one-stop shop model."

Reductions in Marketing Barriers
Reports of barriers for advertising programs via social media channels were widely encountered during the site visits. The primary issue noted was the slow approval process by the DMWR that ACS programs must navigate to market their programs. For many of the ACS staff interviewed, this approval process has been a persistent barrier to marketing. Under the restructure, SFL-TAP was touted as, "its own marketing agency—it gets it done and it goes wider." Further, under the new alliance, the ERP is using not only Facebook, a known platform used by spouses to share information, but also additional social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter to broaden potential reach.

Less Redundancy in Services
The primary aim of the restructure as noted by command was to eliminate redundancies on base. One improvement since the restructure is related to career fairs. Career fairs that were mandated by AR for the ERP to offer have now merged with those offered by the SFL-TAP. This operational change to career fairs has helped reduce confusion among potential employers. Previously, each career fair catered to a different population (i.e., transitioning service members versus spouses) with distinct employment needs. Another noted efficiency was related to attendance for resume writing classes. As previously mentioned, one respondent noted that the ERP would often get one or two people (i.e., "onsies and twosies") attending a class each time it was offered. The respondent questioned if offering a class to one or two people was an efficient use of ACS staff resources. Although not a robust measure of long-term program changes, as a result of the restructure, the ERP already appears to have increased class participation.

Improved Data Collection
SFL-TAP has its own data management system known as TAP 21; however, the ERP continues to use the ACS CTS that aggregates the data reported to IMCOM. Respondents did not know when or if that directive would change. Use of TAP 21 for the SFL-TAP is required and as one respondent noted, "The G1 tracks who is working with a transitioning Service member and notes all interactions — although we don't get into the weeds." The TAP 21 system is capable of tracking different mechanisms including the (self-reported) end results for employment after transition. The SFL-TAP partners with the DoD, the DoL, and VA to track data and can also report on unemployment status, another metric accessible by the SFL-TAP. One respondent noted that while these Capstone reports must be requested and can take some time to receive (i.e., they are not a crucial part of the daily management of the program), they have capabilities that the ACS CTS does not have that could potentially measure program effect for transitioning Service members.

Program Continuity
When initially asked about changes to the ERP, one respondent noted, "Nothing's changed, there have been no derogatory changes." Echoing this statement, another respondent remarked "It's still (ERP manager's) program to run, (the PM) has been directed to continue to run it as before." These statements were reported to be reflective of the attitude of the director of the DHS. Staff appointments have not changed and are not anticipated to change. However, respondents noted that the SFL-TAP has access to more funds because it is a required program for transitioning

Service members. At Fort Drum, the ERP and the SLF-TAP programs had a positive, productive working relationship prior to the restructure; therefore, competition for resources between the two programs was not considered an issue. Respondents indicated that the most used ERP services continue to be resume writing, interviewing skills, and entrepreneurship classes. Further, neither respondent reported any perceived changes that were likely to negatively affect the ERP.

Program Challenges

One respondent remarked that despite improvements in program reach and reduction in perceived barriers present in the ACS model, there will always be spouses who "live with their heads in sand and complain that there are no resources to help them." Thus, program reach is likely to remain a challenge for the ERP even with the restructure. Another issue is that these programs cannot use their appropriated funds to offer incentives to spouses to participate. A primary barrier to employment and use of employment resources is lack of child care. As one respondent noted, "we tell them all of the time not to bring their kids to the career fairs and every time, they do it anyway"; thus, "it's a catch-22 for those living paycheck to paycheck," and some individuals cannot afford to find child care and, as such, are not able to work or even attend programs designed to help them find employment.

Evaluation Limitations

This evaluation was designed to examine outcomes attributed to participation in the ERP. As with any study, there are limitations and unanticipated challenges that can impact the strength of the findings. First, although the response rate was sufficient, the sample size, especially of the prospective sample, was too small to run statistical tests. Second, the initial sample recruitment was restricted based on garrison participation. Moreover, there were significant structural changes to the ERP at three (TRADOC) garrisons that greatly impacted their ability to participate in the evaluation. In addition, there was an unanticipated structural change to one of the garrisons selected for the site visits. Third, both samples were dominated by two garrisons; thus, findings may not be generalizable to all the garrisons that participated in the study let alone Army-wide. Fourth, data were all self-reported, which can be especially problematic in retrospective studies (e.g., participants may have a selective memory or be prone to remember and attribute positive events and outcomes to one's own agency and attribute negative events and outcomes to external forces). Fifth, the overall design is lacking a comparison group, which would be necessary to attribute ERP participation to outcomes. Finally, the time frame was limited to 90 days after initial participation in the ERP, which may affect the Clearinghouse's ability to look at longer-term outcomes such as job status and satisfaction. Limitations withstanding, this evaluation design involved four independent data-collection components (i.e., the retrospective survey, prospective survey, follow up telephonic interviews, and site visits). Thus, while the conclusions presented below are not causative, they are based on the triangulation of multiple data points and should be considered with confidence, albeit cautiously.

Conclusions

The evaluation plan was designed to assess the extent to which participation in the ERP was associated with the intended outcomes as delineated in the logic model (see Appendix A for more detailed information on program outcomes). The primary aims of the evaluation included the following:

- Aim 1: Examine whether the ERP improves employment related outcomes among program participants (e.g., job status, job satisfaction, employment related self-efficacy skills).
    - Approximately half of the participants, in both retrospective and prospective samples, attributed obtainment of a job to use of the ERP.
    - On average, ERP participants were satisfied with their jobs.
        - In the retrospective sample:
            - 76% (n=72) of respondents reported that their knowledge, skills, and abilities matched the requirements of their current job to a large or very large extent and were considered fully employed.
            - 57% (n=54) reported that their current job fulfilled their needs and that their current job was a good match for them.
            - 46% (n=43) reported their current job enabled them to do the kind of work they wanted to do.
        - In the prospective participants:
            - At Wave 1, 70% (n=11) of ERP participants stated that their job fulfilled their needs at least to some extent.
            - At Wave 3, 79% (n=11) of ERP participants reported that their job fulfilled their needs at least to some extent.
            - 44% (n=7) of ERP participants, at Wave 1, reported their current job fulfilled their needs or enabled them to do the kind of work they wanted to do to a large or very large extent. At Wave 3, this number was 21% (n=3) of ERP participants.
    - There was no significant difference between ERP participation (i.e., dosage, specific services) and job status. (Retrospective specific finding)
    - Job-search self-efficacy attributed to ERP participation was relatively high at baseline and remained stable. (Prospective specific finding)
    - Almost half of ERP participants (49%; n=44) who did not receive a job reported receiving an interview. (Retrospective specific finding)
    - At least a third of ERP participants who reported they did not receive a job, reported receiving a job interview at all waves. (Prospective specific finding)
- Aim 2: Assess whether the ERP improves participants' satisfaction with military life (e.g., readiness, retention, financial stability and satisfaction).
    - 90% (n=172) of ERP participants experienced some level of financial worry, and 34% (n=62) rated their financial worry as high, a seven or higher on a scale of 1-10. (Retrospective specific finding)
    - 98% (n=50) of ERP participants experienced some level of financial worry, and at Wave 1, 47% (n=13) rated their financial worry as a seven or higher on a scale of 1-10. (Prospective specific finding)
    - 63% (n=140) of ERP participants indicated that they were in good shape financially. (Retrospective specific finding)

- o 49% (n=26) of ERP participants indicated they were in good shape financially at Wave 1, and, by Wave 3 (n=20), this percentage had increased to 54%. (Prospective specific finding)
  - o The most common financial challenges were trouble paying bills and debts, preparation for military transition, and non-military spouse employment.
  - o Financial worry significantly decreased over time, and many participants had a positive change in their financial situation. (Prospective specific finding)
  - o 72% (n=154) of ERP participants are satisfied with military life. (Retrospective specific finding)
  - o 66% (n=78) of spouses favored their spouse staying in the military (Retrospective specific finding).
- o <u>Aim 3</u>: Gauge program user satisfaction with the ERP (e.g., did the user have a positive experience, what are the most used programs and services?).
  - o 93% (n=200) of ERP participants were highly satisfied with the overall ERP and individual services, and means for individual services ranged from 4.0 to 4.6. (Retrospective specific finding)
  - o 92% (n=47) of ERP participants were highly satisfied with the overall ERP and individual services, and means for individual services ranged from 3.7 to 5.0. (Prospective specific finding)
  - o The most used ERP service was resume writing, especially resume writing for federal jobs.
  - o The most commonly used military resource for employment, besides ERP, was Military OneSource.
  - o Approximately half of the sample (n=18) was using ERP 90 days after their initial engagement with the program. (Prospective specific finding)
- o <u>Aim 4</u>: Examine whether the ERP is more or less effective across different groups of participants (e.g. Service members, spouses, users of specific programs or services).
  - o No differences in job outcomes were found between different types of users or different types of ERP services usage.
  - o Prospective survey participants reported an average mean level (1.7-2.7 out of a total of 4) of engagement with specific networking job-search behaviors (e.g., contacting people, asking for referrals to information about a job, speaking with previous employers), which indicates that more time could be spent on this important job-search behavior.
  - o Spouses from the prospective survey reported more satisfaction with their job's ability to utilize their knowledge, skills, and abilities compared to Service members. Note, there were very few Service members in the response group.
    - ▪ 58% (n=4) of spouses at Wave 1 reported being "very satisfied" with the extent that their job utilized their knowledge, skills, and abilities compared to only 25% (n=1) of Service members.
    - ▪ 80% (n=8) of spouses at wave 3 reported being "very satisfied" with the extent that their job utilized their knowledge, skills, and abilities compared to 50% (n=1) of Service members.

- o Service members (n=14) seemed more satisfied with the military. (Prospective specific finding)
  - ▪ Approximately 80% (n=11) of Service members at Wave 1 were satisfied with how the military supports their family, while only 53% (n=18) of spouses were satisfied.
  - ▪ 89% (n=8) of Service members at Wave 3 were satisfied with how the military supports their family, while only 61% (n=14) of spouses were satisfied.
  - o Job seekers and full-time workers, across the three waves of the prospective study, reported a higher job-search self-efficacy than those working part time or not seeking work.
- o Individuals at OCONUS installations that participated in the retrospective survey were more likely to report personal fulfillment for their primary reason for working (47%; n=7) than other response options. They were also less likely to report being employed. Only 25% (n=3) of those at OCONUS installations were employed full time compared to 45% (n=68) at CONUS installations.

Recommendations

Aim 5 of this effort was to provide targeted recommendations to the Army for continuous quality improvement of the ERP. The recommendations below are based on the data collected from the online questionnaires, telephonic interviews and site observations along with evidence-informed practices from the fields of employment and prevention and implementation science. Moreover, recommendations are informed by a recent National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM, 2019) report on strengthening the military family readiness system. These recommendations are actionable; thus, each recommendation was considered in terms of fit within the current ACS ERP infrastructure and weighed against practical considerations (e.g., existing implementation strategies, staffing, cost). Recommendations fit into five broad categories: (1) Infrastructure, (2) Program content, (3) Program implementation, (4) Program reach, and (5) Data collection and evaluation.

Infrastructure

The success of military family readiness services may be hampered because programs, services, and resources are siloed and lack mechanisms to comprehensively monitor and coordinate their contributions (NASEM, 2019).

Recommendation 1: Coordinate and leverage other military-affiliated employment services to efficiently address the needs of all participant types.
- • For example, collaborate with SFL-TAP to provide services tailored to Service members, allowing ERP to focus on providing content tailored to spouses.
- • Coordinate with other military spouse-employment programs (e.g., SECO, MSEP) to ensure a full range of services are provided, thereby reducing potential unnecessary redundancies.

Program content

Understanding what programs and practices may effectively assist job seekers to find job opportunities requires identifying the program's target audience and the evidence-informed components linked to a program's effectiveness.

Recommendation 2.1: Create a standardized decision-tree tool for determining the services needed by participants Army-wide and, thus, create a record of services provided as program participants receive services across the enterprise (see recommendation 5.1 below).

Recommendation 2.2: Utilize evidence-informed components of employment programs (see Perkins et al., 2020)
- Deploy content and skill-based activities that teach job-seeking skills such as increasing professional networking behavior (i.e., contacting previous employers or professional contacts to inquire about possible job leads). Note, networking is a skill that evaluation data suggested could be improved upon among program participants.
- Utilize a strength-based program framework that addresses the emotional and psychological needs of job seekers and military spouses, in particular (i.e., focus on the strengths of the job seeker to increase the motivation and confident use of these skills).

Recommendation 2.3: Develop and utilize effective online employment services tailored for military populations (e.g., online options for offering Federal resume writing and the Federal job-search classes; see Perkins et al., 2020).

Recommendation 2.4: Develop and maintain an Army-wide database of virtual and remote job opportunities.
- Collaborate with other spouse employment (e.g., MSEP, SECO) programs focused on identifying and advertising virtual and telework opportunities at the national level.

Recommendation 2.5: Increase efforts to identify resources to support entrepreneurship opportunities and address common challenges.

Recommendation 2.6: Offer tailored and customized services to address the unique needs of military spouses across the professional continuum (e.g., entry level versus professional level options, understand credentialing and licensure requirements and policies designed to help spouses—see policy level initiatives, page 11).

Recommendation 2.7: Examine current ERP content and how this content is delivered.
- Consider hosting learning communities and utilizing reading about interviewing and resume writing online as the basis for discussion.
- Continue to offer and refine resume writing with direct instruction.

- Other effective components include the following: interviewing with direct instruction or a mentor/coach, resume writing using an online tool and mentor/coach, career planning through reading online and direct instruction and mentor/coach, using entrepreneurship with a mentor coach, and offering job accommodations with direct instruction.

Program implementation

Research repeatedly demonstrates that evidence-based programs that produce positive outcomes depend on high-quality implementation (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; NASEM, 2019).

Recommendation 3.1: Add "spouse to meet with ERP prior to moving" as a part of the PCS preparation checklist to help spouses who are interested in working know the employment opportunities available at the next duty station and to expedite securing of employment.
- Provide referrals for child care resources in advance of a PCS to help expedite a sometimes lengthy process of obtaining child care.

Recommendation 3.2: Establish follow-up protocols for staff to provide consistent ongoing services and tailored support.
- ERP should focus on the services that only a local, networked employment service provider can offer and coordinate with other spouse employment programs (e.g., MOS, MSEP, SECO) where possible to provide services that can be generalized for all spouses, irrespective of location or PCS cycles (e.g., telework opportunities, licensing and credential requirements).

Recommendation 3.3: Ensure that all ERP staff have the professional credentials required to perform the job (e.g., Certified Career Services Provider credentials).

Recommendation 3.4: Ensure adequate technological resources (e.g., computers with internet access, printers) are available and maintained for program participants to use.

Program reach

Increasing reach is critical to the success of a program. Actively reducing barriers and increasing motivation for individuals to participate in the program or service (Morgan, et. al, 2018) increases the likelihood of individuals utilizing the program.

Recommendation 4.1 Provide resources that break down barriers for employment while at OCONUS garrisons (e.g., offer intensive language classes, prioritize telework options available in SOFA countries, provide guidance on visa requirements, inform about tax implications of local employment).
Recommendation 4.2: For face-to-face classes, utilize evidence-informed barrier reduction

techniques (e.g., offer child care, meals, and sessions at night).
- Utilize multi-pronged marketing practices (e.g., ensure that ERP staff have access to spouse-focused social media, such as spouse/partner pages and local Family Readiness Groups) to target spouse participants.
- Work with CYS to find creative ways to offer child care during service provision.

Data collection and evaluation

Measurement is an important part of accountability and enables opportunities for continuous learning and subsequent program improvements (i.e., continuous quality improvement) (NASEM, 2019).

Recommendation 5.1: Implement an intake assessment tool for continuous identification and assessment of need to link participants to tailored programs and services.

Recommendation 5.2: Develop an integrated information infrastructure that relies on regularly collected process and outcome data, analytical ability, and an organizational mindset that is open to data-informed improvement and change (see chapter 8 of NASEM 2019 report for details).

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Appendix A: ERP Logic Model

Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State

www.militaryfamilies.psu.edu

Program: Employment Readiness Program

Proponent: OACSIM

Component: Active Duty

Participants: Spouses/Partners of Service Members

Inputs: Money, Staff, Technology

Core Continuum:

Activities:
- Outreach to military spouses and Family Members
- Facilitate job fairs/hiring events
- Make contact with employers
- Conduct classes, workshops
- Counseling
- Resume assistance

Short Term Outcome:
- Increased use of services by junior spouses
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Increase in number of spouses employed FT/PT

Intermediate Outcome:
- Greater financial stability
- Increase quality of life

Long Term Outcome:
- Higher retention rates
- Improved economic well-being
- Increase Spouses satisfaction with military lifestyle

MOEs:
- Financial Well-Being, Social Support
- Financial Well-Being, Social Support
- Social Support
- Social Support

The activities are designed to link job referrals and education openings (e.g., workshops and classes) and provide networking opportunities with potential employers (e.g., job fairs). The primary outcome for the target population is to increase the number of employment opportunities. The MOEs include financial well-being, resilience, transitional stress, and social support. The theory of change indicates that increased employment opportunities will improve financial stability and provide its associated benefits (e.g., reduced stress and tension surrounding financial issues). Thus, greater spousal employment will lead to higher retention and mission readiness

Appendix B: Retrospective and Prospective Questionnaires

ACS-ERP Retrospective & Prospective Questionnaires
(As of 21 February, 2019)

Color Key:
Content for Retrospective
Content for Prospective
Content for Retrospective & Prospective Combined

Introduction

Thank you very much for participating in this evaluation of the Army Community Services (ACS) Employment Readiness Program (ACS-ERP) Please read the instructions and each question carefully. Be assured that your responses are confidential. No one outside of the Evaluation team, located at the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State University, will have access to your questionnaires. This means that no one at your installation, Army, or the DoD will be able to see how you answered the questions. When reports are generated for the DoD or the Army, there will be no way to associate you with any particular response.

You may skip any question that you do not want to answer.

If there are any questions that are confusing or unclear, please contact Ms. Lisa White at ldw112@psu.edu or 877-382-9185.

Demographic and Process Items (14 items)

First, we would like to get some basic information about you.

As a reminder, participation in the survey is voluntary. An email address is required to receive the $20 Amazon gift card as a thank you for your participation. Only one questionnaire per email address is eligible to receive an incentive. If more than one family member in a household received the invitation to participate, please ensure that a different email address is used to complete an additional questionnaire and receive an additional $20 Amazon gift card.

To better understand employment related outcomes over a longer period of time, we are also inviting you to complete additional questionnaires at 60 and 90 days from completion of your initial questionnaire. For each completed questionnaire, a $20 gift card will be sent to you via email as a token of our appreciation for your participation. If you complete all three questionnaires, you will receive a total of $60 in gift cards. You will receive an invitation with a link to each of the follow-up questionnaires from the Clearinghouse at 60 and then at 90 days following completion of your initial questionnaire.

At the end of the questionnaire you will be asked if you would be willing to participate in a telephonic informational interview; if selected, you would receive an additional $20 Amazon gift card.

Your personal information (e.g., email address) will remain confidential and will not be shared beyond the Evaluation team. As a reminder, your identity will not be associated with your responses and neither the DoD nor the Army will have no way to see that you participated or how you answered the questions.

Enter: Email address

Are you a…? (Select as many as applicable)
Soldier – active duty
Guard
Reserve
Active Duty spouse
Guard spouse
Reserve spouse
Surviving spouse
Retired military
Retired military spouse
Civilian – DoD employee
Civilian spouse
Other_____

DISPLAY LOGIC: FOR ALL NON CIVILIAN RESPONDENTS

What is your/your spouse's soldier paygrade? If retired, what was your paygrade before retiring? If you are a surviving spouse, what was your spouse's paygrade?
Enlisted
E1
E2
E3
E4
E5
E6
E7
E8
E9
Warrant officer
W1
W2
W3
W4
W5
Officer
O1
O2
O3
O4

O5
O6
O7 or higher

What is your gender?
Male
Female

What is your current age? _____

What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
Less than high school diploma
High school diploma or GED
Post high school vocational or technical training (excluding military training)
Associate degree
4-year college degree
Master's, doctorate, or professional degree

What is your race?
Native American or Alaska Native
Black
Asian
West Asian, Middle Eastern or North African
Native Hawaiian
Other Pacific Islander
White/European
Other (Please describe):_____

Are you of Hispanic/Latino/a origin?
Yes
No

What is your current duty station?
Bavaria
Benning
Carson
Drum
Hood
Knox
Leavenworth
Meade
Rock Island
Wiesbaden
Other:_____

How long have you been at your current duty station/garrison?
Less than 6 months

6-12 months
1-2 years
2+ years

DISPLAY LOGIC: ASKED OF ACTIVE DUTY RESPONDENTS/SPOUSES ONLY

When do you anticipate your next PCS?
Within the next 6 months
6-12 months
1-2 years from now
2+ years from now
Other: _____

How many times have you or your family relocated due to the military? _____

How long have you been in the military?/been a military family? _____

1 year or less
1-3 years
3-5 years
5-10 years
10-20 years
More than 20 years

What is the most important reason for you to work?
Bills/basic expenses
Extra spending money
Long-term savings
Avoid boredom/keep busy
Personal fulfillment
Keep skills up to date
Return on education
Other: _____

Participation in ACS-ERP and *other* employment services (7 items)

When was the first time that you used any ACS-ERP services?
Within the last year
1-3 years ago
3-5 years ago
5-10 years ago
More than 10 years ago

At how many other duty stations have you used any ACS-ERP services?
None, this is my first time using ACS-ERP
1 other duty station
2-4 other duty stations

More than 4 other duty stations

Overall, how many total hours of ACS-ERP services would you say you have used? (e.g., hours spent: taking classes, participating in job fairs, meeting with an ACS-ERP counselor, working on a resume as part of a class).
1-5 hours
5-10 hours
10-20 hours
20+ hours

Which of the following ACS-ERP employment services did you use? Select all that apply.
Orientation on job searching skills/services
One-on-one assistance with job search
Help deciding what kind of work to do
How to write a resume
How to interview for a job
Job search support group
Referrals to temp agencies
Advice on how to dress for job interviews
Announcements of job openings
Job fairs
Help in completing job applications
Use of word processing equipment for preparing job search materials
Other: _____

What other *non* ACS-ERP employment services have you used?
Spouse Employment and Career Opportunities (SECO)
Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP)
Military Spouse Employment Program (MSEP)
Other:_____
None/Not applicable

Which of the following employment services did you use outside of ACS-ERP? Note: Do not include activities you participated in as part of ACS-ERP.
Orientation on job searching skills/services
One-on-one assistance with job search
Help deciding what kind of work to do
How to write a resume
How to interview for a job
Job search support group
Referrals to temp agencies
Advice on how to dress for job interviews
Announcements of job openings
Job fairs
Help in completing job applications
Use of word processing equipment for preparing job search materials
Other: _____

None, I only used ACS-ERP activities and services

If ACS – ERP activities and services were not available for use, would you use other employment related programs or resources would you use?
Yes
No
If yes, please list and describe other programs or resources

Satisfaction with ACS-ERP activities and services (3 items)

Based on the activities you noted participating in, how satisfied are you with the following services you received:

	Not at all satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
How to write a resume (example)	1	2	4	5
Job fair (example)	1	2	4	5

On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to recommend the ACS-ERP to other military families?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
Unlikely to recommend   Highly likely to recommend

Is there any other feedback that you wish to share about your satisfaction with the ACS-ERP (e.g., staff were helpful/not helpful, program hours are/are not convenient for my schedule):

Job Search Skills Self-Efficacy (12 items)

How confident are you to do the following?	Not at all confident				A great deal confident
Make the best impression and get points across in an interview	1	2	3	4	5
Contact and persuade employers to be considered for a job	1	2	3	4	5
Complete a good job application or resume	1	2	3	4	5
Use friends or other contacts to discover promising job openings	1	2	3	4	5
Use friends and other contacts to find out about employers that need your skills	1	2	3	4	5
Make a good list of all your skills that can be used to find a job	1	2	3	4	5

How often have you done each of the following throughout your job search?	Never or	Seldom	Moderately	Often	Very often, at

	zero times				least ten times
Contacted people you know to ask for their advice or leads regarding your job search	1	2	3	4	5
Called or visited someone just to get more information about a certain job or place to work	1	2	3	4	5
Asked for a referral to someone who might have helpful information or advice about your career or industry	1	2	3	4	5
Secured leads from contacts or acquaintances regarding a person to contact for information that would help you in your job search	1	2	3	4	5
Talked with friends or relatives about possible job leads	1	2	3	4	5
Spoke with previous employers or business acquaintances about their knowledge of potential job leads	1	2	3	4	5

Job Status (9 items)

Are you currently looking for work?
Yes
No
Not at present, but anticipate looking in near future

Are you currently employed?
Yes, currently serving in military
Yes, currently working full time, as a civilian for the military (more than 35 hours a week)
Yes, full time (more than 35 hours a week)
Yes, part time
No, not currently working, but seeking work
No, not currently working or looking for work
Other: _____

DISPLAY LOGIC: IF RESPONDENTS IS CURRENTLY SERVING OR WORKING AS CIVILIAN

Please indicate the reasons that you are looking for work.
Anticipate transitioning out of military in near future
Anticipate retiring in near future
Looking for additional work while serving
Other: _____

What is your primary reason for using the ACS-ERP?
Anticipating PCS *and* will be looking for work in near future
Anticipate looking for work in near future

General interest in brushing up on job-search skills
Interest in helping spouse with job search
Dissatisfaction with current job
Other: _____

DISPLAY LOGIC: IF RESPONDENT IS LOOKING FOR WORK

To date, how long has your *current* job search been?
Less than 3 months
3-6 months
6-12 months
1-2 years
2+ years

During your current job search, have you received a job interview?
Yes (please indicate the number of job interviews):_____
No

How many hours have you devoted a week to looking for a job?
1 hour or less
1-5 hours
5- 10 hours
10- 20 hours
More than 20 hours

Do you believe that you have ever received a job as a result of participating in ACS-ERP?
Yes (please explain):_____
No (please explain): _____
Possibly (please explain):_____

DISPLAY LOGIC: IF RESPONDENT IS WORKING PART-TIME

What is your main reason for only working part-time?
Could only find part-time work
Want to spend time with children
Other family/personal obligations
Do not have required license or credential in the occupational field
I do not want to work full time
I am self-employed
Other: _____
Job Satisfaction (4 items)

SKIP LOGIC: RESPONDENT ANSWERS IF EMPLOYED FULL OR PART-TIME

Source: Saks & Ashforth, 2002 Person-Job Fit Scale, Time 1a=0.86; Time2a=0.87, 4 items

	To a very little extent	To a little extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent
To what extent do your knowledge, skills, and abilities match the requirements of the job?	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent does the job fulfill your needs?	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent is the job a good match for you?	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent does the job enable you to do the kind of work you want to do?	1	2	3	4	5

Military Life Satisfaction (5 items)

Overall, how satisfied are you with the military way of life?
Very satisfied
Satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied

DISPLAY LOGIC: IF RESPONDENT IS EMPLOYED BY MILITARY (ACTIVE DUTY OR CIVILIAN)

Overall, how satisfied are you (or were you) with your military employment?
Very satisfied
Satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied

DISPLAY LOGIC: RESPONDENT ANSWERS IF SPOUSE

Do you favor your spouse staying in the military or leaving at the next opportunity?
I strongly favor staying
I somewhat favor staying
I have no opinion one way or the other
I somewhat favor leaving
I strongly favor leaving
N/A my spouse is separating/retiring soon

How satisfied are you with the respect that the Army shows family members?
Very satisfied
Satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied

How satisfied are you with the support and concern that the Army has for you and your family?
Very satisfied
Satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied

Financial Stability (3 items)

How often do you worry about being **_able to meet_** normal monthly living expenses?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never Worry			Rarely Worry			Sometimes Worry		Worry All the time	

What best describes the financial condition of you and your spouse?
Comfortable
Some difficulty
Not comfortable

Please check any Financial or Legal problems you experienced in the past year:
Pay issues (access to pay, errors)
Trouble paying debt or bills
Car or other property item repossession
Bankruptcy or foreclosure
Power of attorney problems
Child custody/family legal problems
Filing for legal separation or divorce
Finding suitable employment for non-military spouse [married soldiers only]
Job security/preparation to transition
UCMJ or other disciplinary problems
Other financial or legal problems
Please specify:_____
I did not experience any of the above problems

Open Ended General Feedback (2 item)

Is there any other feedback that you wish to share about your experiences using the ACS-ERP?
_____

Would you be willing to be contacted for an additional telephonic informational interview by a member of the Clearinghouse evaluation team? Program respondents selected for an additional 15-20 minute telephonic interview will be compensated with an additional $20 gift card.
Yes
No

If Yes: Please provide your first and last name and the best phone number to reach you at:

First Name, Last Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Thank you & Incentive Information

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire! Your responses have been recorded and we will send your $20 gift within the next five business days. Please contact Lisa White at ldw112@psu.edu or 877-382-9185 if you have any questions about this project or gift card.

Appendix C: Recruitment Materials

Retrospective Email Invitation
Dear Employment Readiness Program User,
Army Community Services (ACS) has contracted with the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at The Pennsylvania State University (Clearinghouse) to conduct an evaluation of the ACS Employment Readiness Program (ERP). The goal of this evaluation is to help the Army understand use of the program and its associated outcomes. Your participation will help the Army to strengthen the ERP and improve the likelihood of positive outcomes; thus, ensuring that military families receive the best possible support.
Our records indicate that you used the program within the past seven months; thus, we are using the contact information that you provided to invite you to participate in a brief (20 minute) web-based questionnaire (link below).
Participation in the questionnaire is voluntary and anonymous. If you choose to provide your email address to the Clearinghouse, as a thank-you for your participation, upon completion of the survey, you will receive a $20 Amazon gift card via email. Even though the ACS-ERP team is inviting you, no one outside of the Penn State Clearinghouse Evaluation team will have access to your responses. This means that no one at your Garrison, the Army, or the DoD will know that you participated, or be able to see how you answered the questions.
Army service members, Army Guard and Reserve members and spouses are eligible to participate, along with Army retirees, Army retiree spouses, and Army surviving spouses. Note that non-Army service members, non-Army DoD civilians, and spouses of DoD civilians are not eligible to participate in this questionnaire.
If you have any questions about the survey, please contact the Clearinghouse at 877-382-9185 and reference the ACS-ERP evaluation. We greatly appreciate your time and assistance to help us improve the ACS-ERP.
You may access the survey by clicking on or copying and pasting this link into your web browser:
https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3CNH8IktnIld5kN

Prospective Email Invitation
Dear Employment Readiness Program User,
Army Community Services (ACS) has contracted with the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at The Pennsylvania State University (Clearinghouse) to conduct an evaluation of the ACS Employment Readiness Program (ERP). The goal of this evaluation is to help the Army understand use of the program and its associated outcomes. Your participation will help the Army to strengthen the ERP and improve the likelihood of positive outcomes; thus, ensuring that military families receive the best possible support.
Our records indicate that you have used the program within the past 30 days; thus, we are using the contact information that you provided to invite you to participate in a brief (20 minute) web-based questionnaire (link below).
Participation in the questionnaire is voluntary and anonymous. If you choose to provide your email address to the Clearinghouse, as a thank-you for your participation, upon completion of the survey, you will receive a $20 Amazon gift card via email. Even though the ACS-ERP team is inviting you, no one outside of the Penn State Clearinghouse Evaluation team will have access to your responses. This means that no one at your Garrison, the Army, or the DoD will know that you participated, or be able to see how you answered the questions.

Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State

www.militaryfamilies.psu.edu

In addition to the initial questionnaire, to better understand program use over a longer period of time, if you provide your email address, we will also invite you to complete additional questionnaires at 60 and 90 days from completion of your initial questionnaire. For each completed questionnaire, you will receive an additional $20 gift card for a total of $60 in gift cards. Army service members, Army Guard and Reserve members and spouses are eligible to participate, along with Army retirees, Army retiree spouses, and Army surviving spouses. Note that non-Army service members, non-Army DoD civilians, and spouses of all DoD civilians are not eligible to participate in this questionnaire.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact the Clearinghouse at 877-382-9185 and reference the ACS-ERP evaluation. We greatly appreciate your time and assistance to help us improve the ACS-ERP.

You may access the survey by clicking on or copying and pasting this link into your web browser: https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cuTdgUUCgf0eaVv

Appendix D: Telephone Interview Questionnaire

1. What Army Community Service Employment Readiness Program (ERP) services have you used?

2. How many locations have you used ACS ERP?

3. What did you like about the service/s (you used) or the program in general?

4. How did you learn about the ERP?

5. Have you used any other employment services or non ACS employment services (e.g., MOS, MSEP)? Which ones?

6. If yes, was there anything particularly useful about the ERP that you think sets it apart from other employment services?

7. What method of program employment content delivery would you most prefer? (e.g., online, face to face).

8. Were there any unintended consequences that resulted from using the program (e.g., meeting other spouses, learning about other ACS resources)?

9. How could the ERP be improved?

10. Is there anything you look for when using employment programs (e.g., credentials of staff)? (if relevant) Would you be more likely to use a program if the staff had credentials from an association like the National Career Development Association?

11. Were there any gaps in the services you received?

12. Did you participate in any classes or services that SMs were also attending?
    *   If yes: Were you comfortable attending classes with SMs?

13. Do you think that the ERP should refine its offerings for spouse-specific content?

14. Are you currently employed?
    *   If employed – how satisfied are you with the job you received? Why or why not?
    *   If not employed – are you currently looking for work? Why or why not?

15. What industry are you employed in, or wish to be employed in? In what field\s do you have experience, training or an educational background?

16. Have you or your family experienced any financial problems (or other related difficulties) due to your unemployment or under-employment now or in the past? Please describe them.

17. Does your employment/lack of employment impact your preference for your spouse to stay in the military?

18. Do you have anything else that you would like to share with us?

Appendix E: NVivo Codes

ERP Services Used
Federal Resume Writing
- Class
- On-on-one
- Online

Job Postings
Email distribution list
Physical or onsite posting board
Linkedin Class
Interviewing Services
- Mock interview class
- General interview class

ERP Center Services (computers, printers)
Career or Job Fair
General Resume Writing
- Class
- One-on-one
- Online
- Resume builder software

One-on-one Services (General)
Federal Job Search Assistance
- Class
- One-on-one

Small Business Workshop
Dress for Success (closet or service)
Other
Question Not Asked
Unclear Answer

Number of Locations Used ERP
One location
More than one location
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

Currently Employed
Yes
No, but looking
No, not looking
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

Received Job as a Result of ERP
Yes
No
Not sure
Received a referral (federal job)
Received an interview/s
No, but not looking for a job
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

Job Satisfaction
Yes
No
Somewhat or in some ways
Underemployed
Not employed or N/A
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

Likes or Positives about ERP Experience
Staff availability (present, answers phones)
Staff knowledge about Federal jobs (search or resumes)
Staff general helpfulness (confidence building)
Staff general knowledge of employment services or processes
Staff responsiveness (returns emails, calls)
Staff knowledge about military specific employment issues (i.e., spousal employment)
Offers broad assortment of services
Free services
Career or job fair
Virtual employment resources
Job postings (email or physical job board)
No commitment involved
Resume assistance services
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

How Learned about ERP
Emails
Flyers or printed ad
Soldier transition process (i.e., SFL-TAP referral)
Family Readiness Group (FRG)
Friend or non-spouse family member
Military spouse
Newcomer orientation

Social media
ACS or other military program
Don't remember
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

Use of Other Employment Services
Yes, used
No, have not used
Not sure
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

Unintended Consequences of ERP Use
Professional network expanded
Learned about other ACS or military services
Learned about other non-military resources
None
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

What Sets ERP Apart from Other Employment Services
Staff positive attitude
Trustworthy staff
Relatable staff (due to military experience)
Services targeted to military families
Cleanliness
Broad assortment of services
Location or accessibility
Childcare services
Computer and technological resources
Federal jobs information
Military spouse specific knowledge or services
Access to or information about virtual or remote jobs
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer
None

Content Delivery Preference
In person
Online
Mixture of both
Other

Question not asked
Unclear answer

Recommendation for Improvement
In need of more marketing or advertising
Create a mentor or networking group
Federal jobs class is confusing/too much content
Offer services after work, not during work hours
Needs to have more available staff (to answer calls, emails)
Location of program is inconvenient
Improve digital job postings (i.e., organize by job type)
Improve physical job boards (i.e., organize or keep more up to date)
Improve efficiency of job postings (i.e., use keyword search, make easier to read)
More tailored content
- For younger generation
- For professionals (i.e., with licenses)

Staff improvements
- More knowledgeable, qualified about employment services
- Offer more follow-up (e.g., phone, email)
- More availability by phone or email
- More networked into local employment resources
- Improve attitude

None
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

Gaps in ERP Services
Yes
No
Not sure or maybe
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

Service Members in Attendance
Yes
No
Not sure
Other
N/A
Question not asked
Unclear answer

Need for Spouse Specific Content
Yes
No

Maybe, somewhat, mixed feelings
N/A
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

Industry Match and Alignment
Yes
No
N/A
Somewhat or mixed
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

Financial Problems
Yes
No
Some or at some point
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

Preference for Spouse to Stay in Military
Yes, stay
No, leave
No preference
Affects preference for next transfer station
Some or mixed feelings (pros and cons)
Spouse is retiring (N/A)
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer
Overall ERP Experience
Positive
Positive, recommend to others
Negative
Mixed
None
Other
Question not asked
Unclear answer

References to Other Issues
Spousal preference
Career, educational background
Volunteerism

SFL-TAP
Other barriers to employment (e.g., childcare, OCONUS location)
Other OCONUS issues

Appendix F: Implementation Guide

Implementation Guide for the Army Community Service (ACS) Employment Readiness Program (ERP) Outcome Evaluation

Greetings,

The Employment Readiness Program (ERP) at your Garrison has been selected to participate in an outcome evaluation project being conducted by the Penn State Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness in collaboration with OACSIM and IMCOM. This evaluation is essential to recognize how ACS-ERP is working and provide direction as to where there might be opportunities for program improvement to further serve military families.

The outcome evaluation will involve two different groups of ERP participants. The first group of individuals will be past participants of ERP, also called a retrospective sample. The second group of participants will be new users, those that are currently involved in ERP activities, also called a prospective sample. The ERP evaluation may be best thought of as two concurrent evaluations as we will be asking you to help us solicit feedback from families who participated in ERP at different times and provide them one of two possible questionnaires based on their participation. A summary of the two samples and the participation timeline for these two groups is included in more detail later in this guide.

We know how busy you are and that this is a challenging time for many ACS programs; we want to thank you in advance for your participation. Our job, during this evaluation, is to make this effort easier on you! This guide is meant to serve as a communication tool for the overall effort. We wanted to equip you with as much information up front so that nothing ends up being a surprise. We are here to assist with each step of this process!

We have put together this guide to offer you information on the evaluation, including expectations, tasks, a timeline and a recruitment worksheet. This guide is also intended to help you anticipate and plan for the tasks that will be required to ensure this evaluation runs smoothly and on schedule. If you have questions about what is expected or concerns please do not hesitate to reach out to us at any time.

The following documents are included in this guide:

- **Summary of the ERP Outcome Evaluation Project**
- **Timeline & Checklist for the ERP Outcome Evaluation Project**
  - *Supporting Document 1: Creating the Prospective and Retrospective Samples for the ERP Evaluation*
  - *Supporting Document 2: Additional ERP Activities*
  - *Supporting Document 3: Sample Recruitment Email for ERP Participants*
  - *Supporting Document 4: Recruitment Worksheet*
  - *Supporting Document 5: ACS ERP Retrospective & Prospective Questionnaires (Combined)*
- **FAQs**

Thank you again for your participation! We appreciate the time and effort you will put in to making this project a success for the families you serve.

Sincerely,

Clearinghouse Evaluation Team

Summary of the ERP Outcome Evaluation Project

Project Aims

The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness was contracted by the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management (OACSIM) and is working in partnership with Installation Management Command (IMCOM) to conduct an outcome evaluation of the Army Community Service (ACS) Employment Readiness Program (ERP). The data are to be used specifically for understanding the aims and program improvement purposes detailed below:

- Aim 1: Understand if the ERP improves employment related outcomes among program participants (e.g., job status, job satisfaction, employment related self-efficacy skills).
- Aim 2: Understand if the ERP improves satisfaction with military life (e.g., readiness, retention, financial stability and satisfaction).
- Aim 3: Understand program user satisfaction with the ERP (e.g., did the user have a positive experience, what are the most used programs and services?).
- Aim 4: Establish if the ERP is more or less effective across different groups of participants (e.g. service members, spouses, users of specific programs or services).
- Aim 5: Provide targeted recommendations to the Army for continuous quality improvement of the ERP.

Process

1. Site Selection: 10 Garrisons were selected to participate in the outcome evaluation. Garrisons were selected by the IMCOM ERP program manager and the evaluation team based upon current program stability, usage and diversity in size and Command.
2. Evaluation Plan Development: The Clearinghouse, in conjunction with OACSIM and IMCOM decided on outcomes and developed an evaluation plan based on established measures and a research design best suited to address the project aims (i.e., retrospective and prospective studies). The measures included in the questionnaires include: satisfaction with ERP, job status, job satisfaction, satisfaction with military life, financial stability or satisfaction, job search skills, and social capital/networking behavior. Demographic information will also be collected (e.g., role in military, gender, education, race/ethnicity, PCS/time in location, time in job search, participation in ERP activities, participation in employment related non-ERP activities, barriers to employment, motivation to work). How these measures are anticipated to lead to outcomes is depicted below in the ERP Evaluation Logic Model.
3. Recruitment & Enrollment: ERP staff at the 10 selected Garrisons will invite former (retrospective) and new/current (prospective) program users via email to participate in a questionnaire. Interested users will enroll via a web link provided in the invitation and access the questionnaire online, using Qualtrics software. Enrollment will be open for 30 days and depending on the program user type, a 60- and 90-day follow-up questionnaire may be sent:
   a. Retrospective program users will be surveyed at one time point.
   b. Prospective users will be surveyed at three time points. Once enrolled, over a three-month period, prospective participants will be sent email invitations by the Clearinghouse and/or reminders to complete follow-up questionnaires as prescribed.
   c. ERP participants completing each type of questionnaire will also have the opportunity to complete a telephonic informational interview upon completion of the questionnaire. The advantages and limitations of the prospective and

retrospective sampling method as well as the data collection timeline for each sample are detailed below.

4. <u>Incentives</u>: ERP evaluation participants will receive a $20 Amazon gift card for completion of *each* questionnaire, sent by the Clearinghouse via email within 15 days of questionnaire completion. Prospective evaluation participants will have the opportunity to complete up to 3 questionnaires (i.e., initial, 60-day, and 90-day). All users will be invited to participate in a telephonic, informational interview after the online questionnaire is completed. Participants who complete the telephonic interview will receive an additional $20 Amazon gift card.

5. <u>Site Visits</u>: Site visits *may* be conducted by the Clearinghouse team at a few Garrisons to better understand program implementation practices. In-person interviews may also be conducted with program users and program staff during the site visits.

Outcomes & Data Collection Timeline

Outcome	Retrospective T-1 (Pre-180)	Prospective T1 (Baseline)	Prospective T2 (Post-60)	Prospective T3 (Post-90)
Demographics	X	X	X*	X*
Satisfaction with ERP	X	X		X
Job search skills self-efficacy		X	X	X
Social networking		X	X	X
Job status	X	X	X	X
Job satisfaction	X	X	X	X
ERP participation	X	X	X	X
Other employment activity participation	X	X	X	X
Military satisfaction	X	X		X
Financial stability	X	X		X

*Limited number of questions. Note: Although the outcome addressed may the same between the two questionnaires, the number of items may vary between the two samples as well as between each wave of the prospective.

Timeline & Checklist for ERP Outcome Evaluation Project

Garrison participation in this project will run from April to November 2019. As you will observe from the timeline, Garrison participation will be needed in the first few months of the evaluation, but then tasks will fall almost exclusively to the Clearinghouse once data collection is fully underway. Below is a month-to-month breakdown of specific tasks that will need to be completed for this project. ***This timeline is tentative and may be adjusted if setbacks occur***.

April – June 2019

Tasks for Garrison POC

- ☐ Participate in webinars to understand more about how evaluations work, and receive briefing on project details.
- ☐ Designate two POCs: a main and a backup POC and provide contact information to the Clearinghouse.
- ☐ POCs prepare two separate participant listservs – one retrospective and one prospective. Information on sample selection and creating these email distribution lists is provided in this guide (see *Supporting **Document 1: Creating the Prospective and Retrospective Samples for the ERP Evaluation)***.
- ☐ Provide documentation of Garrison specific ERP activities (see ***Supporting Document 2: Additional ERP Activities)***.

July 2019

Tasks for Garrison POC

- ☐ <u>When instructed on 8 July,</u> Post/circulate the recruitment flyer (to be provided by Clearinghouse)
- ☐ <u>When instructed on 8 July</u>, send the recruitment email and questionnaire link to participants of each sample. Although sample recruitment emails are included in this guide, the Clearinghouse will send the final version prior to 8 July (see ***Supporting Document 3: Recruitment Emails for ERP Participants)***.
- ☐ After you have sent the recruitment email to each group, provide the Clearinghouse with documentation about the initial email invitation (see ***Supporting Document 4: Recruitment Worksheet)***.
- ☐ Send the reminder emails to gather more participation in the study using the same listserv of participants; complete Recruitment Worksheet.
- ☐ Continue to send the initial recruitment email to newly enrolled program users as needed during the 30-day recruitment period; complete Recruitment Worksheet.
- ☐ Assist with planning site visits from Clearinghouse staff (if needed).

July – October 2019

Tasks for Clearinghouse Evaluation Team

- ☐ Follow-up data will be collected on prospective participants.

November 2019 – February 2020

Tasks for Clearinghouse Evaluation Team

- ☐ Analyze data collected for each of the ERP groups.
- ☐ Complete a report with evaluation findings and recommendations based on the data collected from the questionnaires. A copy of the report will be provided to the Garrisons who participated in the study. This report will not have specific details of that Garrison, but will provide information on how ACS ERP is doing as a whole.

Supporting Document 1:
Creating the Prospective and Retrospective Samples for the ERP Evaluation

Below are parameters for how to query ERP users for the retrospective and prospective samples. Each sample must be made of *unique* participants. That is, ERP users should not be represented in both groups. This list will not be shared with the Clearinghouse. When instructed, you will use the listservs to send the email invitations to participate in the questionnaire. There are different questionnaires for each group of participants; therefore, it is important to follow the process of creating the samples, so as not to negatively impact the evaluation results.

1. Query ERP users based on the guidelines below for each sample.

Sample	Sample Description	Query
Retrospective	Examines perceptions of **past** ERP participants (i.e., those who have used the program within the last 6 months prior to the start of the evaluation period).	• Pull email addresses for <u>ALL</u> participants who attended ERP classes or services within the past 6 months prior to start of evaluation (see note below about one-month buffer period). • Example: July 8 start date = pull email addresses for participants between Dec 8 2018 – June 8 2019. • Exclude individuals who are current ERP participants.
Prospective	Examines perceptions of **new** ERP participants (i.e., users of the program beginning at the start of evaluation period).	• Collect contact information for <u>new</u> users of ERP classes and services. For evaluation purposes, new users are individuals who are just starting participation in ERP up to one month prior to the evaluation period. • Example: July 8 start date =pull email addresses for participants between June 8 – July 8 and actively recruit participants from July 8 – Aug 8. Note: To capture all new users between the start of the evaluation and the close of the 30-day recruitment window, email invitations may need to be sent at multiple times. • Exclude individuals who have been using ERP prior to June 8 2019. These individuals will be represented in the retrospective sample.

2. Gather email addresses for ERP participants and create two separate listservs or contact lists.
3. Ensure that no ERP participant is represented in both groups.
4. Record the number of participants in each group.
5. Review the Recruitment Worksheet to ensure that all necessary information is being recorded for reporting to the Clearinghouse.

Note: Note that the prospective sample includes program participants within the 30 days prior to the start of the evaluation period. Thus, as a buffer to help ensure that the two groups do not contain the same respondents, the retrospective sample includes program participants within the past six out of seven months of the start of the evaluation period.

Supporting Document 2:
Additional ERP Activities

The following information needs to be reported to the evaluation team at the Clearinghouse prior to the email invitation push to ensure consistency in samples across Garrisons and understand the environmental context. This information should be provided to the Clearinghouse via email.

ERP Activities
1. Please provide Garrison-specific curriculum information for the evaluation period:
    a) What classes are being offered and when (i.e., do you have a schedule of classes/programs, job fairs, etc.)?
    b) What curriculum do you have that is associated with each of the classes? If requested, could you provide it to the Clearinghouse?
2. How does your Garrison collaborate with other programs like MSEP or SFL TAP?
3. How many program staff does your ERP have?
4. Has your ERP recently been impacted by budget cuts? If yes, please describe the impacts.

Sample Recruitment Emails for ERP Participants

Since the Clearinghouse will not have access to contact information for potential participants, the email invitation will need to come from ERP program staff. Once participants access the questionnaire they will be informed of the need to provide their email address to the Clearinghouse for future contact and to receive a digital incentive. Also, to ensure anonymity of participants, the Clearinghouse will not provide a record back to ERP program staff about who participated. Therefore, reminders to participate in the questionnaire will be sent to the entire participant listserv acknowledging that some receiving the email may have already participated and are not eligible to participate again.

The recruitment email text will be sent to you electronically prior to 8 June when you will be directed to send the invitation emails. You may copy and paste from the email when it is sent to you. It is critical that you use the *exact text* that you receive from the Clearinghouse. The email language below is for *reference only*.

The retrospective evaluation participants will only receive one link to one questionnaire to fill out based on your email invitation. For prospective evaluation participants, the Clearinghouse will send additional questionnaires directly to the participants after receiving their email address from their initial participation. In this regard, an email that is sent by the ERP POC as a reminder to participate is different from the follow-up invitations sent by the Clearinghouse as part of the prospective 60 and 90-day follow-up questionnaires.

Sample **Text for Email Invitation**

Retrospective

Dear Employment Readiness Program User,

The Department of Defense policy requires the military services to evaluate the impact of family readiness programs. As such, the Army Community Services (ACS) has contracted with the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at The Pennsylvania State University (Clearinghouse) to conduct an outcome evaluation of the ACS Employment Readiness Program (ERP). This evaluation will help to determine if the program is meeting its intended goals and objectives.

The ACS-ERP records indicate that you used the program within the last calendar year, thus we are using the contact information that you provided to invite you to participate in a brief (20-25 minute) web-based questionnaire. Your participation will help the Army to better understand use of the program and its outcomes associated with job status, job satisfaction, job search skills, military life satisfaction, and financial stability. Your participation will help the Army to strengthen the ERP and improve the likelihood of positive outcomes; thus, ensuring that military families receive the best possible support.

Participation in the questionnaire is voluntary and anonymous. If you choose to provide your email address, as a thank-you for your participation, upon completion of the survey, you will receive a $20 Amazon gift card. No one outside of the Penn State Clearinghouse Evaluation team will have access to your questionnaires. This means that no one in the Army, at your Garrison, or the DoD will know that you participated, or be able to see how you answered the questions. When reports are generated for the DoD or the Army, there will be no way to associate you with any particular response.

To participate in the survey, please click on the link below and you will be directed to detailed instructions, and the web-based questionnaire. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact the Clearinghouse at 877-382-9185 and reference the ACS-ERP evaluation.

We greatly appreciate your time and assistance to help us improve the ACS-ERP.

Supporting Document 4:
Recruitment Worksheet

Instructions:

When instructed by the Clearinghouse, send an initial email invitation for each listserv. Note: Standardized text and a survey link to the online questionnaire will be provided by the Clearinghouse evaluation team immediately prior to commencement of data collection (anticipated July, 2019).

1. Did you follow the process for creating the samples? Did you have to make any contingencies?
2. Report to Clearinghouse the following for the **Initial Email:**

   Date initial/invitation emails were sent
   Retrospective: _____
   Prospective: _____

   Number of emails sent:
   Retrospective: _____
   Prospective: _____

   Number of bounce-backs received:
   Retrospective: _____
   Prospective: _____

   Revised sample size (after invalid emails are removed):
   Retrospective: _____
   Prospective: _____

3. Report to the Clearinghouse the following for any additional **Initial Emails** for new **recruits to the Prospective Sample. Note, send invitation emails as new program participants become eligible during the 30-day recruitment period.**

   Date invitation email #2 was sent
   Prospective: _____

   Number of emails sent:
   Prospective: _____

   Number of bounce-backs received:
   Prospective: _____

   Revised sample size (after invalid emails are removed) – please combine with the first batch of initial invitations emails:
   Prospective: _____

   Date invitation email #3 was sent
   Prospective: _____

   Number of emails sent:
   Prospective: _____

   Number of bounce-backs received:

Prospective: _____

Revised sample size (after invalid emails are removed) – please combine with the first and second batch of initial invitations emails:
Prospective: _____

4. Report to the Clearinghouse the following for the **Reminder** Emails. Note, send the first reminder email 10 days after the initial/invitation email was sent.

Date follow-up/reminder email #1 was sent
Retrospective: _____
Prospective: _____

Number of emails sent:
Retrospective: _____
Prospective: _____

Number of bounce-backs received:
Retrospective: _____
Prospective: _____

Revised sample size (after invalid emails are removed):
Retrospective: _____
Prospective: _____

5. Report to Clearinghouse the following for the last R**eminder** Emails. Note, send the last reminder email 10 days after the second reminder email was sent (20 days after the initial invitation email was sent).

Date follow-up/reminder email #2 was sent
Retrospective: _____
Prospective: _____

Number of emails sent:
Retrospective: _____
Prospective: _____

Number of bounce-backs received:
Retrospective: _____
Prospective: _____

Revised sample size (after invalid emails are removed):
Retrospective: _____
Prospective: _____

FAQs

- Why was my installation selected?
  - o Your Garrison was one out of 10 selected to participate in the outcome evaluation. Garrisons were selected by the IMCOM ERP program manager, and

the evaluation team based upon current program stability, usage and diversity in size and Command.

- Why are the two samples necessary?
  - o The 2015 Active Duty Survey of Spouses suggests that it takes longer than 1-4 months for many spouses to find jobs after a permanent change of station/move. Therefore, a retrospective sample would allow for the examination of job status and satisfaction outcomes with a sample that has had a more realistic follow-up period for job outcomes. However, a retrospective sample cannot reliably measure ERP's impact on shorter-term outcomes that may lead to job status or satisfaction such as, job search skills self-efficacy.
  - o A prospective sample allows for the reliable examination of intermediary outcomes that may occur before achieving employment. Prospective samples in general are considered a more robust scientific design. It provides more accurate data and allows for examining data in a longitudinal manner (i.e., to see if outcomes are changing over time). It also allows for the establishment of monitoring outcomes, so that job status outcomes can be examined at a later time, over time, and in a continuous manner.
  - o Due to the short time frame in which to conduct the evaluation, two samples were necessary to account for different trajectories in outcomes.
- Who can participate in the evaluation?
  - o Adult program users – i.e., active duty service members, spouses, family members, retirees, and DoD civilians. Note that spouses of DoD civilians and members of other branches of the U.S. Armed Forces are not eligible to participate. Other eligibility criteria are based upon date of participation. Program users under 18 years of age are not eligible to participate.
- What are the incentives provided to participants?
  - o Prospective participants will receive up to $60 total for their participation in three questionnaires ($20 each).
  - o Retrospective participations will receive $20 total for their participation.
  - o An additional $20 incentive will be provided for participation in follow-up telephonic interviews.
- Can ERP users participate in the prospective and the retrospective evaluation?
  - o No, ERP users should be unique to each sample. There may be instances where users participated in ERP during both time frames specified by the query criteria. For example, maybe you had an ERP participant who found a job as a result of ERP, but is still looking for something better so he/she continues to participate in various workshops and counseling sessions. Please contact the Clearinghouse with questions or to discuss user type discrepancies.

Appendix G: Common Components for Employment

The Veterans Metrics Initiative
Using Program Common Components for the **Employment** Domain to
Predict Study Outcomes, July 2020   Menu 5A

BACKGROUND

- Wave 1-5 participants nominated employment programs they used since they discharged from the military or deactivated from Active Duty. 60% reported using a program in the employment domain at Wave 1, 58% at Wave 2, 54% at Wave 3, 51% at Wave 4, 52% at Wave 5, and 53% at Wave 6.
- Programs with verified URLs and nominated by 3 or more veterans were coded using the common components analysis technique to predict employment outcomes at Waves 2-6.

CONTENT COMPONENTS

Content components describe what a program teaches or what information it provides.

- **Resume writing** - teaching a veteran how to write a resume and/or providing resume templates
- **Interviewing** - teaching interviewing skills, providing interviewing tools, or mock interviews
- **Job board, search engine** - a static or interactive listing of available jobs
- **Career planning and exploration** - matching a veteran's interest to available jobs and creating a plan for attaining a long-term career goal. This includes industry overviews which show veterans what similar occupations exist across diverse industries.
- **Translating military to civilian work** - helping the veteran understand the similarities between their military job and possible civilian jobs, sometimes using a Military Occupational Specialty Code (MOS) or Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) translator. It can also help transfer military licenses and certifications to their civilian equivalents.
- **Networking conference** - a meeting to share ideas with a large group connecting over a common interest
- **Job accommodations** - providing information on accommodations to veterans with a disability or other condition that prevents standard employment
- **Entrepreneurship** - covering the skills and information to start and run one's own business
- **Job training and certification** - providing training in a specific field with a path to employment, such as fellowships, job placement, or industry certifications

PROCESS COMPONENTS

Process components capture how a program conveys information or teaches skills.

- **Reading online**: online text or handouts, no interaction involved
- **Direct instruction**: an instructor teaches using a lecture, manualized curriculum, or video
- **Rehearsal, practice**: acting in a hypothetical situation with feedback, such as a mock interview
- **Interactive online tool**: web-based tools that include some interaction with the participant, including personalization of information (beyond just a "search tool")
- **Mentors/coaches**: one-on-one program delivery allowing for content tailored to the individual veteran
- **Social support, peer learning**: sharing more personal information about a shared problem in an informal environment
- **Socializing casually**: non-professional get-togethers without information provided
- **Networking group**: a formal sharing of professional information

EFFECTS OF COMPONENTS ON OUTCOMES

After controlling for demographic variables, we used growth curve modeling to predict the following outcomes (see back):

- Getting a job after reporting looking for work at a previous wave
- Receiving a promotion from one wave to another
- Self-report leaving a job for a better opportunity from one wave to another

COMPONENTS PREDICTING GETTING A JOB

Content ↓, Process →	Reading online	Direct instruct.	Online tool	Mentor, coach	Other
Interviewing	✓3 ✓4	✓3		✓3	
Resume writing	✓2 ✓3	✓2 ✓3	✓3	✓3	
Job board, search engine			✓2 ✓3		
Networking conference					✓✓content only 3 4
Career planning, exploration	✓3	✓3	✓2 ✓3 ✓4	✓3	
Translating mil. to civilian work		✓2		✓2 ✓3	
Entrepreneurship				✓3	
Job accommodations		✓4			✓✓content only 3 4
Job training, certification					
Career fair					✓content only 3

2 = components used at Wave 1 by veterans who were looking for a job at Wave 1 predicted that veteran getting a job at Wave 2

3 = components used at W1 or W2 by veterans who were looking for a job at W1 or W2 predicted that veteran getting a job at W3

4 = components used at W2 or W3 by veterans who were looking for a job at W2 predicted that veteran getting a job at Wave 4

COMPONENTS PREDICTING RECEIVING A PROMOTION

Content ↓, Process →	Reading online	Direct instruct.	Online tool	Mentor, coach	Other
Interviewing	✓3				
Resume writing	✓3 ✓4	✓3	✓3 ✓4		
Job board, search engine			✓3 ✓4		
Networking conference					✓content only 3
Career planning, exploration	✓3 ✓4		✓3 ✓4	✓3	✓✓networking 3 4
Translating mil. to civilian work		✓3 ✓4	✓3 ✓4		
Entrepreneurship					✓content only 3
Job accommodations					
Job training, certification		✓3 ✓4		✓3 ✓4	✓✓peer learning 3 4
Career fair					✓virtual 5

5 = components used at Waves 3 or 4 predicted that veteran receiving a promotion at Wave 5

COMPONENTS PREDICTING LEAVING A JOB FOR A BETTER OPPORTUNITY

Content ↓, Process →	Reading online	Direct instruct.	Online tool	Mentor, coach	Other
Interviewing	✓4 ✓5	✓2 ✓3		✓3	
Resume writing	✓2 ✓3 ✓4 ✓5 ✓6	✓2 ✓3 ✓5 ✓6	✓3 ✓4 ✓5 ✓6	✓3	
Job board, search engine			✓2 ✓3 ✓4 ✓5 ✓6		
Networking conference					✓✓✓content only 3 4 5
Career planning, exploration	✓4 ✓5 ✓6	✓2 ✓3 ✓4 ✓5 ✓6	✓2 ✓3 ✓4 ✓5 ✓6	✓4 ✓6	✓✓✓networking 4 5 6
Translating mil. to civilian work		✓3	✓3 ✓4 ✓6		
Entrepreneurship		✓5			✓content only 4
Job accommodations					✓content only 3
Job training, certification				✓5	✓content only 6
Career fair					✓✓✓content only 3 4 5

6 = components used at Waves 4 predicted that veteran leaving their job for a better opportunity at Wave 6