

Washington state wins grant to help train veterans for civilian cybersecurity jobs

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Story

Public-private partnership tackles disproportionately high unemployment rates

OLYMPIA, WA – The Washington State Department of Commerce was awarded \$412,632 from the National Institute of Standards and Technology today to help veterans train in the field of cybersecurity.

Many service members have training in fields related to cybersecurity, a career field that is expected to grow by 24 percent annually in Washington through the year 2020. As the military prepares to reduce its troop strength, an estimated 13,000 service members are expected to exit the military through Joint Base Lewis McChord over the next year.

“We have cybersecurity companies looking for top talent and we have highly-skilled service members who will be looking for work as they transition out of the military. This is a perfect fit,” Gov. Jay Inslee said. “This grant will help us make sure Washington’s veterans and service members can take advantage of exciting career opportunities right here at home.”

Veteran unemployment rates can be as much as 30 percent higher than the general population. This kind of workforce development can lead veterans to careers with potential annual salaries in excess of \$100,000.

Commerce will partner with the University of Washington Tacoma and the State Office of the Chief Information Officer to create a program that includes educational pathways, real world internship experiences and connections to private employers.

“Investing in Washingtonians to build a highly-skilled workforce is a core tenet of our strategy for job creation and economic growth,” said Commerce Director Brian Bonlender. “Our service men and women transitioning their skills and work ethic honed in the military to the civilian labor force are a tremendous asset for our state’s employers. Public-private partnerships such as this one ensure that we are meeting the needs of veterans and employers alike.”

In addition to addressing an important skills gap in Washington, many of the service members in the program will go on to positions that improve the resiliency of public and private sector employers.

“This project will build the capacity of our state’s communities, companies and colleges so they can tap the tremendous opportunity represented by transitioning veterans to defend and develop

Washington’s digital economy,” said Will Saunders, Inslee’s [Information and Communication Sector](#) lead for the state.

UW Tacoma will continue research and development of a recruitment, assessment and education model that gives veterans the option to earn cybersecurity certifications and degrees from the associates to graduate level.

“The development of educational pathways for veterans that this funding will support is directly in line with the mission, vision and core values of UW Tacoma’s Institute of Technology and the university-wide Center for Information Assurance and Cybersecurity,” says Institute Director Rob Friedman. “It will advance the cyber-related R&D collaborations already underway with industry, government and military organizations in the South Sound and provide solid career opportunities for veterans.”

The Office of the Chief Information Officer will provide the opportunity for “real world” internships working in cybersecurity activity for local governments. The OCIO will also work towards building a cybersecurity program that can be expanded to serve more local governments at an affordable cost.

”Government must stay vigilant in the face of ever-increasing cybersecurity threats,” said State of Washington Chief Information Officer Michael Cockrill. “This program helps us build the organizational capacity to defend against these threats.”

The multi-discipline, interagency, public-private partnership is expected to use the work done under the grant as the basis for a workforce development and cybersecurity research initiative.

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