

LOS ANGELES
MAYOR'S OFFICE
OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS

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Report*

■ Executive Summary

The purpose of this project was to identify high-growth industries in Los Angeles, research veteran skill sets and competencies, and provide recommendations on how the Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs can support veteran employment for 10,000 Strong and future initiatives. Our research consisted of both primary and secondary research, including over 80 hours of interviews with veterans, human resources executives, experts in the field of veteran employment, economics and policy professors, non-profit administrators and career service professionals. Our secondary research was primarily derived from population and employment data, economic and policy reports and academic studies about veteran issues, primarily skills and employment.

The 10,000 Strong initiative began in 2014 with the goal of employing 10,000 veterans by the end of 2017. The initiative has performed well thus far, surpassing the midway point for 5,000 veteran hires in July of 2015. Through the combination of natural separation and upcoming military drawdowns, thousands of veterans are expected to settle in Los Angeles in the near future. With this influx of population, veteran employment is of crucial importance to the city's social and economic future.

Our research revealed several promising indicators for veteran employment in Los Angeles. Los Angeles is currently enjoying economic stability with projected growth in multiple industries, including high-tech installation, health care services, alternative energy and high-skilled labor.

Additionally, extensive research has been performed to study the skill sets and core competencies of veterans and how those apply to the civilian workforce. These studies identify several key skills, including entrepreneurship, high levels of trust, and skill transferability and adaptability. In addition to the skill sets that veterans bring to civilian employers, employers also receive external benefits as a result of hiring veterans. Companies cite improved perception by the public when they are known as a company

that hires veterans, and employers who hire veterans are also eligible for federal tax breaks and reimbursements.

Based on our research, we developed two sets of recommendations. The first is to make the 10,000 Strong website, as well as future veteran employment initiative websites, a more robust tool for both veterans and employers. This can be accomplished by adding tools such as the Harrison Assessment and GuideOn to facilitate skill matching and career development, matching military jobs to civilian jobs that require similar skills, and curating a list of the best resources available to veterans to assist with employment. These recommendations can improve the current 10,000 Strong website as well as assist with future veteran employment initiatives.

Our second group of recommendations centers around increased focus on employer partners. We recommend creating incentives for companies to partner with 10,000 Strong including access to veterans with validated skill sets and community recognition, encouraging partners to create or develop their veteran hiring programs, and targeting high-growth industries in Los Angeles for positions requiring veteran skill sets. These recommendations would further increase collaboration between the Mayor's Office and employer partners and provide the partners with tangible benefits for their participation now and in future initiatives.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs was established by Mayor Eric Garcetti to provide support and services to veterans in Los Angeles. One of these programs is the 10,000 Strong initiative, which aims to secure employment for 10,000 veterans by 2017 in Los Angeles. With the expectation that tens of thousands of military personnel will leave the service in the next five years, this project aims to develop sustainable processes to assist veterans in finding work in Los Angeles after they have left the military.

The purpose of this report is to summarize our team's research and findings and present recommendations regarding sustainable veteran employment in Los Angeles. This report includes background information, methodology, key findings and recommendations.

1.2 Problem, Objective, and Scope

1.2.1 Problem

The main problem faced by veterans seeking work in the private sector is that while the military imparts valuable core competences and skill sets to service members, there is a lack of understanding about how those skills and competencies translate to civilian job requirements. This project's aim was to discover insights regarding the skill sets of the veteran population, the skill sets that prospective employers desire, and how to bridge the gap between the two in order to secure employment for veterans. We worked to develop a comprehensive picture of the human capital of the entire veteran population in Los Angeles and how it fits into the overall employment landscape.

1.2.2 Objective

The objective of this project was to answer the following three-part question:

1. What are the core competencies and skill sets of veterans in Los Angeles?

2. What are the high-growth industries in Los Angeles, and what are the core competencies and skill sets that those employers seek in their employees?
3. How can the Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs and its partners bridge the gap between the two, facilitate the translation of skills when overlap exists, and provide effective support to connect veteran employees and prospective employers?

1.2.3 Scope

In order to answer these questions, we focused on collecting data (primary and secondary) about the veteran population, employers, and high-growth industries using the following three steps:

1. Understand the current landscape of government and private agencies, initiatives and studies that are relevant to the issue of veteran employment.
 - Collect and read appropriate secondary research that has already been published.
 - Learn about how various private and government agencies interact to create the current landscape of veteran initiatives.
2. Conduct primary research with both the veteran population and prospective employers.
 - Develop an interview template to ensure high quality sampling.
 - Create a framework to translate military skill sets to civilian terms.
 - Understand the trajectory of various high growth industries in Los Angeles and how they could employ veterans.
3. Identify gaps and deficiencies between the veteran skill sets and desired employee skill sets and develop recommendations based on those findings.
 - Analyze the multiple sets of interview data to find similarities and differences.

- Recognize patterns that emerge among different segments of the veteran population or industries.
- Identify which partners, agencies and initiatives are best suited to support actions based on our findings.

1.3 Current Status of the 10,000 Strong Initiative

Since 10,000 Strong was launched in June 2014, over 5,000 veterans have been hired in Los Angeles, and the initiative reached its midpoint goal slightly ahead of schedule. Over 100 employer partners are registered with the Mayor's Office and have offered to provide job postings for veterans. The 10,000 Strong website shows a list of these employer partners and provides a link for a new employer to become a partner. The Mayor's Office organized a Human Resource Advisory Council, which provides trainings for these employer partners on the best practices for hiring veterans. The office also partnered with the University of Southern California School of Social Work's Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans and Military Families¹ to provide employers with training on how to best leverage veteran skill sets. In addition, Mayor Garcetti developed a partnership with PsychArmor Institute, an organization that provides services for those living with and working with veterans. PsychArmor Institute provides a free call center for employer partners who aim to recruit veterans and assists them with any questions they may have while navigating the hiring process.

On the veteran side, the Mayor's Office launched Text2Vet, a text-messaging platform that helps veterans gather important information to transition to civilian life. By texting "veteran" to LA211, veterans are able to receive an outline of what is available to them in various areas, including education, employment, legal services, medical care, and housing. The service connects veterans to veteran peer navigators that direct them to the needed information or resources.

¹ Castro, Carl Andrew, Sara Kintzle, and Anthony Hassan. 2014. *The State of the American Veteran: The Los Angeles County Veterans Study*. Los Angeles: University of Southern California.

2 Methodology

2.1 Overview

We performed extensive primary research by interviewing veterans, human resources executives, experts in the field of veteran employment, economics and policy professors, non-profit administrators and career service professionals. These interviews were conducted in person and over the phone.

Our secondary research consisted of analyzing current economic policy, understanding the veteran employment landscape in Los Angeles and performing a literature review of the extensive academic studies that have been performed to identify and validate veteran skill sets.

2.2 Hypothesis and Questions

The following three initial hypotheses and associated questions guided our primary and secondary research:

1. Within the city of Los Angeles, there is a large population of unemployed veterans who would benefit from a cohesive employment initiative from the Los Angeles Mayor's Office.
 - What are the demographic segments within the larger veteran population?
 - What different services do these segments require?
 - What value would an initiative from the Los Angeles Mayor's Office provide to both veterans and employers?
2. Veterans possess skills that are useful to potential employers, but there is a disconnect when veterans attempt to translate these skills to a civilian environment.
 - What are the main skills that veterans possess?
 - What military skills can be translated to the civilian market?

- How can these military skills be translated to the civilian market?
 - What employment tools do veterans need to connect to employers?
 - How can veterans be better connected to local government support services?
3. Employers actively want to hire veterans and would benefit greatly from an employment initiative from the Los Angeles Mayor's Office.
- How do employers currently begin their efforts to hire veterans?
 - What tools would employers like to have available to help them connect with veterans?
 - What job skills are employers looking for?
 - What are the barriers to hiring a veteran?
 - How do employers find qualified veterans?
 - How do employers interview and recruit veterans?

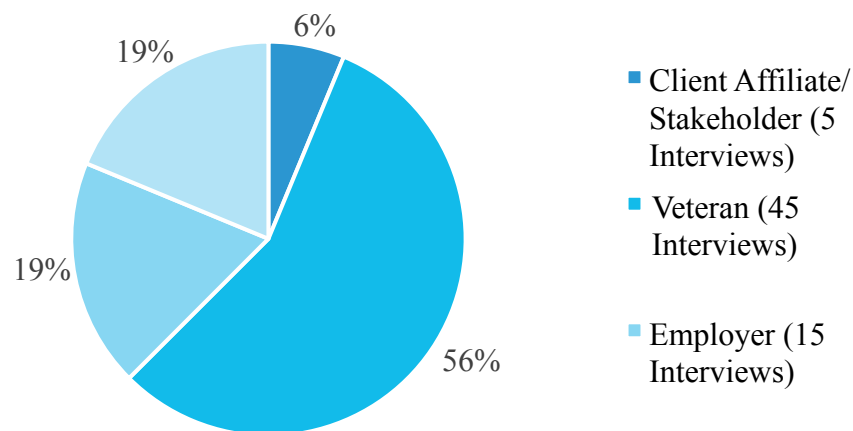
2.3 Primary Research

Our team completed a total of 215 primary research hours, including 82 interviews. We interviewed veterans, employers, experts, and stakeholders to assemble a comprehensive view of the veteran landscape in Los Angeles. Our focus was on veteran interviews (45) to gain understanding of their skill sets and pain points. We started by interviewing student veterans in both graduate and undergraduate programs. Graduate students largely represented former officers, while those enrolled in undergraduate programs were largely former enlistees. We also interviewed veterans who had not used higher education to make the transition by speaking with members of Army reserve units in Los Angeles and Camp Pendleton, CA, as well as veterans from other branches including the Coast Guard and Marine Corps. By interviewing veterans from various social, economic and educational backgrounds, we were able to better understand the wide range of employment issues that veterans face.

The Mayor’s Office provided our team with contacts that led us to employers in various industries, including hospitality, financial services, high-tech, and retail. We also reached out to veteran hiring managers independently to learn more about their experience employing veterans and how to structure an effective hiring program.

In addition, we interviewed economics and policy professors at UCLA Anderson to gain a clear understanding of the economic forecast of Los Angeles and the high-growth industries that may be best suited to support veteran employment. The Mayor’s Office also connected us with nonprofit administrators and career placement professionals that provided their views on the veteran employment landscape and how it can be improved.

Interviews by Category



The remaining primary research hours consisted of interview coordination and analysis, assessment of online tools, participation in online courses and site visits to military bases.

2.4 Secondary Research & Analysis

Secondary research was essential to our understanding of the employment outlook in Los Angeles and the demographics of the veteran population that is facing this outlook. We formed this understanding by looking at U.S. Census data and studies conducted by the University of Southern California and the California State Library. We

also used military sources to research future drawdowns and how these will affect the demographics of the veteran population and size of the labor pool. Economic analyses were used to identify key high-growth industries in Los Angeles and form recommendations for industries that can support veteran employment.

Our secondary research also served to validate the findings from our interviews regarding veteran skill sets. Extensive research exists on the subject, and it was used to confirm the skills and traits that were most commonly cited in our interviews.

3 Key Findings: Los Angeles and Veteran Employment

3.1 Veteran Demographics in Los Angeles

The current veteran landscape in Los Angeles has been the subject of a wide variety of previous research. Estimates from the U.S. Census for 2015 state there are 320,000 veterans in Los Angeles County and 100,000 veterans in the City of Los Angeles.² This means that veterans make up 3.2% of the city's population.³ A comprehensive study on veterans from the University of Southern California found that as many as 26% of veterans in Los Angeles are unemployed.⁴

Combining this statistic with the U.S. Census estimates figures of approximately 86,000 unemployed veterans in the county and 26,000 in the city.

A 2013 study by the California State Library gives lower unemployment numbers than the University of Southern California study. Male veterans had an unemployment rate of 7.6% compared to 9% for their civilian counterparts.⁵ ⁶ In addition, 80% of male veterans participate in the labor pool as opposed to 73% of civilian men. Like their male counterparts, female veterans are also more

Los Angeles is expected to absorb thousands more veterans in the coming years due to natural separation from the military and military drawdowns. Los Angeles is enjoying economic stability and high-growth industries in the area include high-tech installation, health care services, alternative energy and high-skilled labor.

² United States Census Bureau. n.d. "United States Census Bureau." *QuickFacts, Los Angeles County, California*. Accessed November 12, 2015.
<http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/06037,0644000,00>.

³ Census Reporter. n.d. *Census Reporter*. Accessed November 12, 2015.
<http://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US0644000-los-angeles-ca/>.

⁴ Castro, *The State of the American Veteran*.

⁵ Blanton, Rebecca E. 2013. *Overview of Veterans in California: March 2013*. Sacramento: California State Library.

⁶ United States Census Bureau.

likely to participate in the labor force than their civilian female counterparts (63% versus 58%).^{7 8} Where the statistics from the two sources do converge is in unemployment for younger veterans. Male veterans aged 18-24 have a higher unemployment rate by 4% and female veterans aged 25-34 by 3%.⁹

In 2013, with the decrease of global military commitments and the federal budget sequestration, the military began a large drawdown of its forces. At the height of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Army had 570,000 active duty forces. As of FY16, the Army was down to 490,000 personnel, and because of continued sequestration cuts, plans to decrease the force by an additional 40,000 soldiers have been accelerated by a year to September 2017.¹⁰ If sequestration continues, the Army's personnel capacity will drop to 420,000 by 2019.¹¹ In addition to the cuts to Army active duty end strength, 17,000 civilian employees (44% of whom are veterans) and approximately 28,000 reserve component soldiers are also on the verge of being separated due to budget constraints.^{12 13} The cuts to military personnel will come from both combat units and their supporting counterparts. From previous studies, there is no difference in employment rates between these military jobs.¹⁴

While not as drastic as the cuts to the Army, the Air Force and Marine Corps also face personnel cuts in the coming years. The Air Force will cut 10,000 military¹⁵ and 20,000 civilian¹⁶ personnel across active and reserve components. As of 2015, the Marine Corps has already been forced to reduce its end strength by 12,000¹⁷ and will face a cut of an additional 16,000 personnel by FY17.¹⁸ The importance of these statistics for the Los

⁷ Blanton, *Overview of Veterans in California*.

⁸ United States Census Bureau.

⁹ Blanton, *Overview of Veterans in California*.

¹⁰ Brook, Tom Vanden. 2015. "Army plans to cut 40,000 troops." *USA Today*, July 8.

¹¹ McGarry, Brendan. 2015. "US Army Details Plans to Cut 40,000 Soldiers Across Bases Worldwide." *Military.com*, July 9.

¹² Brook, "Army plans to cut 40,000 troops".

¹³ Vogel, Steve. 2013. "Many federal workers facing furloughs are veterans." *The Washington Post*, February 13.

¹⁴ Castro, *The State of the American Veteran*.

¹⁵ Schogol, Jeff. 2015. "Air Force may cut 10,000 airmen if budget cuts return." *AirForceTimes*, February 5.

¹⁶ Blosser, John. 2014. "In a Smaller Military, Air Force to Cut 3,500 Workers, to Start." *NewsMax*, July 15.

¹⁷ Blosser, "In a Smaller Military".

¹⁸ Perkins, Derrick. 2015. "Corps' 2016 budget temporarily halts drawdown." *MarineCorpsTimers*, February 3.

Angeles Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs is that they indicate that the number of veterans searching for employment will dramatically increase across the city over the next few years. As previous studies have discovered, as many as 80% of veterans do not have jobs lined up when they transition out of the military.¹⁹

3.2 Employment Outlook in Los Angeles

Similar to the health of the overall economy, Southern California has seen modest growth in both Gross State Product (GSP) and employment over the last several years. With the U.S. unemployment rate falling below 5.0% at the end of 2015 for the first time since the Great Recession, Los Angeles County's unemployment rate has lagged slightly behind, tallying right above 7.3% for the end of 2015. According to the UCLA Anderson Forecast from December of 2015, the California unemployment rate should fall to 4.9% by the end of 2017, making it nearly indistinguishable from the national unemployment rate. Los Angeles County's unemployment rate is expected to decline to 6.3% by the end of 2016. Similarly, economists expect national GDP to increase at around 3.0% in 2016, translating to an increase in California employment of 2.1% and Los Angeles County specifically of 1.8%.²⁰

3.3 Top Industries in Los Angeles

Although the employment landscape in Los Angeles is constantly changing and diversifying, there are a few industries that are prominent in the city's economy. The top five largest employment clusters in Los Angeles County (by percentage of employment) as of 2015 are health care (15%), government (13%), leisure and hospitality (11%), retail trade (10%), and manufacturing (8.5%). Together these industries account for nearly 60% of total employment in Los Angeles County.²¹

¹⁹ Castro, *The State of the American Veteran*.

²⁰ Kleinhenz, Robert A. 2016. *2016/2017 Economic Forecast and Industry Outlook*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation.

²¹ Kleinhenz, *Economic Forecast*.

3.3.1 High-Growth Industries

There are several industries within Los Angeles County that are expected to grow rapidly over the next few years. Health care and social assistance is slated to gain nearly 14,000 jobs in 2016. Support and technical services will increase employment by roughly 23,000 in 2016, and construction employment will increase by 9,000 during the year.²² Over the next 5 to 10 years, many economists see continued growth in health care services and technical support services making demand for workers in these industries increasingly attractive. Below is a profile outlook for four major categories of labor that are expected to see the best growth prospects over the next 4 to 5 years.²³

3.3.2 High-Tech Installation

With the rise in broadband, mobile, and digital platform technologies, the tech services industry is undergoing a major expansion. According to the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation, professional and technical services will be the third fastest growing employment category in 2016, with more than 10,000 new jobs created by the end of the year. Although traditionally employers think of tech services as programming or computer engineering, the category also includes the installation and maintenance of high tech hardware and infrastructure. Many of these jobs can be undertaken by workers with technical degrees or on-the-job training and do not require four year undergraduate degrees.

3.3.3 Health Care Services

The aging population in the United States is creating a growing need for workers in health care related services. In fact, in Los Angeles County alone, health care services is the largest employment category currently and is projected to be the fastest growing employment opportunity in 2016.²⁴ Employment opportunities in this sector range from physician assistants to hospice care workers. Most jobs require certification or training, even positions like hospital staff. This sector is attractive for workers who are interested

²² Kleinhenz, *Economic Forecast*.

²³ Kleinhenz, *Economic Forecast*.

²⁴ Kleinhenz, *Economic Forecast*.

in medical science and direct customer service and who have already been trained in some sort of medical science, or who are willing to undertake a professional degree. Overall, this sector is expected to see the most growth out of any industry over the next 5 to 10 years.

3.3.4 Alternative Energy

Green technologies are becoming increasingly ubiquitous in the power sector and are moving closer to viability in terms of commercial use as manufacturing costs decline in the industry. As such, there is increasing demand for workers who can properly install, maintain, and even manufacture green energy components. Although this field is still in its nascent stages, it provides a tremendous growth opportunity for workers interested in being in the field and working with their hands.²⁵ Many of these jobs require training or technical degrees but very few outside of engineering require four year degrees or specializations. This field is expected to grow faster than any other energy category over the next 20 years and is considered a stable working class job opportunity due to the upside potential of the technology.²⁶

3.3.5 High-Skilled Labor

Although many working class manufacturing jobs have disappeared during the great recession, one field that maintained steady employment was “skilled labor,” roughly defined as physical labor that requires the use of tools or specialized training.²⁷ Such examples of skilled labor would be welders, machine and crane operators, specialized mechanics, etc. These jobs almost all require a technical degree or certification, but remain some of the highest paying in the working class fields they occupy.²⁸

²⁵ 2016. *Renewable Energy Overview*. March 2. Accessed February 10, 2016. <http://energy.gov/science-innovation/energy-sources/renewable-energy>.

²⁶ *Renewable Energy Overview*.

²⁷ 2015. *CNBC*. July 20. Accessed January 2, 2016. <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/07/20/survey-shows-growing-us-shortage-of-skilled-labor.html>.

²⁸ *CNBC*.

4 Key Findings: Veteran Skills and Employer Benefits

4.1 Veteran Skills

Several academic studies have found that veterans bring many valuable traits to the workforce as a result of their military service, and companies that hire veterans unequivocally agree. A recent study concluded that 99% of employers report that veterans produce similar or better work than non-veteran employees. Furthermore, 69% reported that veterans are “much better” at their jobs. The success that companies have had in hiring veterans has incentivized them to continue to do so: 99% reported they would hire a veteran again.²⁹

These companies include some of America's largest, like Starbucks, Amazon, General Electric and Wal-Mart. Over 2,000 businesses have made public commitments to hiring veterans as part of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's “Hire Our Heroes” program. These companies have prioritized hiring veterans because of the skills that veterans bring to their civilian work environments.³⁰

The business benefits that these companies tout as a result of hiring veterans is supported in several academic studies. Veteran skill sets have been validated through extensive research on the subject, which “supports a robust, specific and compelling case for hiring individuals with military background and experience.”³¹ While many skills vary across military branches and assignments, several

Employers stand to gain both internal and external benefits from hiring veterans, and veterans bring a range of skills to the civilian workforce, including leadership, teamwork and time management.

²⁹ Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families. 2012. *The Business Case for Hiring a Veteran: Beyond the Cliches*. June 11. Accessed January 7, 2016. <http://goo.gl/BWxvGq>.

³⁰ Fottrell, Quentin. 2014. "Why Starbucks (and Amazon) Want to Hire Veterans." *MarketWatch*, November 11.

³¹ Syracuse, *The Business Case*.

positive traits can be broadly attributed to the veteran talent pool. The most commonly-cited skills in this research include:³²

- Entrepreneurship: Veterans are comfortable operating in ambiguous situations, creating a plan, taking steps to achieve goals, and making decisions in uncertain environments.
- High levels of trust: Veterans both inherently trust their coworkers as well as earn their coworkers' trust in return, and trustworthiness is a predictor of high-performing teams, organizational culture and high morale.
- Skill transferability and adaptability: Veterans are able to take skills learned in isolated situations and apply them broadly, enabling them to be effective in varied and changing circumstances.
- Advanced technical training: Veterans are exposed to technology and undergo technical training as part of their military service, and they are capable of leveraging this expertise in civilian roles.
- Adept in discontinuous environments: Veterans act quickly and decisively in the face of uncertainty and change, resulting in organizational efficacy and advantage.
- Resiliency: Veterans exhibit resilient behavior and the ability to overcome adversity, hardships and trauma, which results in their ability to learn from and bounce back from business failures.
- Team-building skills: Research suggests veterans are adept at organizing teams and identifying the mission, defining team roles and responsibilities and creating a plan of action.
- Organizational commitment: Military organizations are skilled at institutional socialization, and veterans have exhibited deep loyalty and commitment to their civilian employer and colleagues.

³² Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families. 2012. *Guide to Leading Policies, Practices, & Resources: Supporting the Employment of Veterans & Military Families*. June 8. Accessed December 12, 2015. <http://goo.gl/Kw6TmL>.

- Cross-cultural experiences: Studies show that those with military backgrounds have more international experience, speak more languages and demonstrate a higher level of cultural sensitivity in comparison to their peers, resulting in a competitive advantage for organizations operating in a global business environment.
- Experience in diverse work settings: The military represents a heterogeneous workforce of members with diverse educational backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures and values. As a result, veterans are generally more accepting of individual differences, which contributes to forming positive interpersonal relationships in the workforce.

Primary Research: Veteran Skills Word Cloud



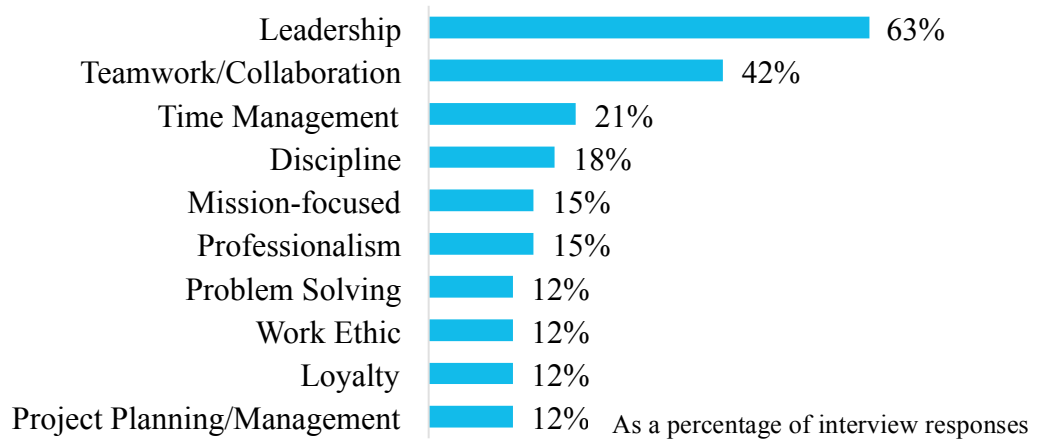
Our primary research with veterans, employers and experts confirmed the results of this published research and also illuminated some additional competencies that veterans generally bring to the civilian workforce. Leadership was the top skill that was mentioned repeatedly and came up in 63% of our interviews. Several interviewees stressed the value of leadership experience that veterans gain in the military, which puts them ahead of their peers, especially at a young age. While leadership was not explicitly listed in the published research, the trait is present in several of the skills listed, such as

entrepreneurship, trust, resiliency and team-building skills, which all require some element of leadership capabilities. One employer explained, “A civilian candidate will say, ‘I study all this stuff,’ and a veteran will say ‘I did all this stuff.’ Leadership is different from management. Most people in the civilian world just manage things; they don’t know that leadership is a hands-on experience that is totally different.” The responsibilities thrust upon military personnel from the very beginning of their service foster leadership skills that many civilians never experience, giving veterans an advantage in leading teams and organizations.

Of our interviewees, 42% cited teamwork and collaboration, which is also included in many of the studies’ findings, especially trust, team-building skills, organizational commitment, cross-cultural experiences and experience in diverse work settings. One expert related the exposure to different cultures and people as a significant differentiator between veterans and civilians: “I cannot think of any other profession where you are working with an extremely diverse group of people in extremely diverse environments, and your only option is to be successful in the face of the challenges diversity brings,” he said. Companies constantly face challenges when people of different backgrounds, skills and interests must collaborate, and employees who are skilled at bridging those gaps and using diversity to their advantage are an extremely attractive trait to employers.

Time management was the third most commonly cited skill by interviewees and appeared in 21% of our interviews. Several interviewees described situations in which military personnel are given a task to complete without much direction or organization, and it is up to the service member to complete that task. Those types of situations develop process-oriented skills such as time management. “Veterans have a problem-solving mentality from day one,” said one veteran. “That includes every step of the process, from strategic planning to time management to execution.”

Top Ten Cited Veteran Skills



Almost all of our interviewees were enthusiastic in their praise for veteran skill sets. Since hard skills vary widely across branches and positions within the military, the data we collected is more robust in describing the soft skills of veterans. The figure above lists veteran skills and how frequently they were mentioned in our interviews.

Overall, there was significant agreement that veterans bring valuable skills to the civilian workforce. As one employer summarized, “If you have a civilian candidate and a veteran one with the same education, the veteran candidate will be a better employee than the civilian one.” Whether it be the individual competencies referenced by our interview subjects or the broader skills validated by academic research, there is substantial evidence that hiring a veteran is a worthwhile investment.

4.2 External Benefits to Hiring Veterans

While companies that purposely hire veterans do so because of the high quality of work output, external benefits exist as well. Some companies believe that actively hiring veterans enhances their reputational value in the eye of the public. As one employer put it: “If it matters to our customers that we are hiring veterans, then we better be hiring veterans!”³³ Another employer noted that hiring veterans helps the company image seem more personal and less corporate. He argued that “by having veterans at our company, it

³³ Syracuse. *Guide to Leading Policies*.

helps our customer feel an affinity to us – that we are not just corporate America, but representative of America's soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines." Another employer stressed the positive effects of associating with other high quality brands like the military, arguing "we think it's good to associate our brand with the military brand, which is our country's most trusted institution," he said.³⁴

There are also financial incentives that are meant to encourage the hiring of veterans. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit is a federal tax credit available to employers who hire those who traditionally face barriers to employment, including veterans. The VOW to Hire Veterans Act of 2011 expanded the WOTC tax credit, and employers are now eligible for tax credits ranging from \$2,400 to \$9,600 depending on the hire.³⁵ In some cases, employers can even be reimbursed for providing on-the-job training, work experience, and a certain number of months of wages. While these external factors rank far below the internal benefits of hiring veterans from a business perspective, they are additional advantages that could be communicated to employers as a marketing tool to encourage their participation in veteran hiring initiatives.

³⁴ Berglass, Nancy, and Margaret C Harrell. 2012. *Employing America's Veterans: Perspectives from Business*. June 11. Accessed January 7, 2016. <http://goo.gl/9oWFDT>.

³⁵ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. 2011. "VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011: Work Opportunity Tax Credits." brochure, Washington, D.C.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Improvements to the 10,000 Strong Initiative and Future Veteran Employment Initiative Websites

5.1.1 Utilize and standardize existing tools such as the Harrison Assessment and GuideOn to facilitate career development

Many of our interviewees and secondary research have cited the difficulties of transitioning to the civilian workforce and adopting a different corporate culture. A Navy veteran interviewed described his first job after leaving the Navy as “mindless labor” and stated that his first employer “didn’t care at all” about the skill set he brought from the military. He ultimately left the company to pursue his undergraduate degree and obtain a validated skill set. If tools such as skills assessments and résumé builders were provided to veterans by the Los Angeles Mayor’s Office, local veterans could more clearly see how the skills they developed in the military could be used in a career that is interesting and meaningful to them, and potentially a long-term fit. The assessment and résumé builder could be accessible from the website, free of charge to veterans.

The Harrison Assessment is an online skills assessment tool that evaluates job seekers on 175 different factors and traits, allowing it to be very precise in its recommendations. Different job profiles are matched to the candidate’s preferences, strengths and development areas. It takes about 20 minutes to complete the survey and provides a comprehensive evaluation of the person’s strengths, weaknesses, motivations and priorities. If veterans had the opportunity to take the Harrison Assessment, it could help them realize both their interest and their suitability for positions within high-growth industries in Los Angeles. The strengths determined through the assessment could also be discussed in interviews and incorporated into résumés. The Harrison Assessment also has the potential to help employers as well as the veterans they seek to hire, as the tool also generates a report for the test-taker’s manager. This report could help the manager work with and develop his employees, especially those going through a challenging cultural change like veterans.

In our focus group that we conducted with veterans to assess the efficacy of the Harrison Assessment, we received mostly positive feedback, as the survey participants felt that the skills, strengths and motivations accurately described their professional personas. While some expressed some concern about the high level of specificity of the job matching results (for example, botanical garden keeper), it is relatively easy to sift through the results and discard the unviable matches. Veterans did highly rate the skills and preferences portion of the assessment, which would provide a helpful base to begin a job search, refine résumés and prepare for interviews.

According to our primary research interviews, résumé writing tends to be difficult for veterans for two reasons. First, they often do not know how to communicate the skills gained in the military in terms that civilians can understand. In other words, they are unsure how to describe them in a way that shows their qualifications for their desired job. The second challenge stems from military culture; veterans tend to view their accomplishments as a team effort and are uncomfortable highlighting individual skills and achievements. However, it is essential that recruiters and human resource representatives understand if a veteran is qualified for the job they are trying to fill. To help bridge this gap, we recommend utilizing GuideOn, a free résumé translation service developed for veterans, by veterans. Currently, GuideOn is specific to Army combat veterans, but the company has plans to develop into a veteran career placement platform, and it has also been selected to run a pilot program in the military's transition curriculum next year. GuideOn's résumé tool helps veterans communicate their skill sets to employers, and also helps employers to understand if the veteran is a qualified candidate. In many cases, recruiters rely on someone with a military background to help them translate skill sets listed on a veteran résumé. Not all companies have this resource readily available and need additional assistance in evaluating the veteran's candidacy for employment.

5.1.2 Match and consolidate military jobs to civilian jobs that require the same skills

Tools that match military and civilian jobs exist in multiple places (for example, the Army website promotes this tool as a recruiting tactic), so we recommend adding one of these tools to the 10,000 Strong website to assist veterans in the Los Angeles area specifically. A former aviation hydraulic and pneumatic mechanic from the Marine Corps explained in an interview that he was successful at landing an engineering internship because he was hired by a Marine Corps veteran that understood his exact skill set. He does not believe he would have been successful in his job search if he did not have a veteran evaluating his skill set. Another veteran described how the cultural gap between military and civilian work inhibited veterans from accurately describing their skills. “Veterans struggle with résumés for two main reasons: they lack professional skills terminology and there is a language barrier between military and civilian culture,” he said. A tool showing how military skills translate to civilian jobs would guide veterans into a more focused job search and allow them to highlight relevant skills on their résumés.

A skill-matching reference guide would also assist recruiters from companies looking to hire veterans in the Los Angeles area. Recruiters would be able to identify which skills they require for their open positions, match those to specific military jobs, and then narrow their search for veterans with specific backgrounds. A reference tool on the 10,000 Strong website that lists specific military jobs and matches them with the skill sets required in common civilian jobs would ease the translation for both veterans and recruiters.

5.1.3 Create a page containing a curated list of resources available to veterans

Many of our veteran interviewees have spoken about the challenges of wading through the maze of resources available to the veterans, often resulting in many of those resources being under-utilized. Of student veterans in undergraduate programs interviewed, five out of five revealed that they relied heavily on the school's veteran

advisor to help them sort through available resources. Veterans not transitioning into higher education do not have access to an advisor's guidance, and can feel lost and overwhelmed by the process. By adding a page of recommended links to the 10,000 Strong website, veterans in Los Angeles could have access to a condensed list of available resources to assist in their job search and transition.

5.2 Increased Focus on Employer Partners

5.2.1 Create incentives for companies to partner with the initiative

There are a number of reasons why companies in Los Angeles should actively hire veterans. A focus on veteran hiring not only helps the veteran community, but it improves business in a number of ways. We believe all of these benefits should be promoted to potential partners. Promotion could be accomplished through marketing materials for 10,000 Strong, or through webinars discussing veteran hiring practices with potential partners. Benefits to partner employers include:

- ***Access to veterans with validated skill sets:*** As discussed previously, our research has identified several positive traits and skills of veterans that translate to the civilian workforce. We believe these validated traits should be communicated when the Mayor's Office recruits partner organizations to promote the benefits of hiring veterans. Potential partner organizations must understand that hiring veterans is not only the right thing to do, but beneficial to their company from a human capital perspective as well. Many of these skills, such as leadership or loyalty, are difficult to teach yet are well developed in a military veteran. The company should be aware that as a partner to 10,000 Strong, they will be able to source candidates with these validated skill sets.
- ***Community recognition:*** Employers can reap branding benefits from being a partner to 10,000 Strong and a top veteran employer in the Los Angeles area. This will develop a positive reputation for the company among both veterans and the greater civilian community. The Mayor's Office can increase reputation-related incentives by providing additional ways for the partner to be recognized by the

community and create a positive image. This could include a “10,000 Strong Partner” stamp on the organization’s career website, or admission to a yearly event honoring top veteran employers in Los Angeles.

- **Financial Incentives:** The VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 expanded tax credits to employers who hire veterans. Tax credit amounts vary depending on a variety of factors, but can serve as additional motivation for employers to partner with 10,000 Strong and actively engage in veteran hiring. In addition, the Department of Veterans Affairs will reimburse employment-related expenses to companies that provide training and work experience to veterans participating in their Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) Program. Employers also may be reimbursed for part of the salary paid to the veteran participating in the program. We recommend that the Mayor’s Office highlight these benefits when recruiting new employers to partner with the initiative.

5.2.2 Increase support to partner companies by encouraging them to create or further develop their veteran hiring programs

Companies within the high-growth industries of Los Angeles may want to create an effective veteran hiring program, but don’t have the knowledge or resources to begin development. We recommend that these companies utilize PsychArmor Institute, a free educational platform for those who live or work with veterans. The Mayor’s Office already has a partnership with PsychArmor to provide a call center for veteran employers. However, the organization also provides online courses for employers seeking to implement a veteran hiring program which could be very useful to new employer partners. The first course, “How to Create a Veteran Hiring Program,” is narrated by Evan Guzman, Head of Military Programs and Veteran Affairs for Verizon. The course first highlights veteran skill sets and makes a very strong case for the business benefits of hiring veterans. It then provides an overview of recruiting strategies for transitioning service members, National Guard and reserves, wounded warriors, and military spouses. Partner companies should be encouraged to enroll in this course if they are considering implementing a formal program.

Partner companies should also be educated on how to build a veteran-friendly culture to promote career development. The PsychArmor Institute course, “Creating a Military Friendly Culture & Onboarding Program,” would be incredibly beneficial for companies to use as a guide to either creating or evaluating their culture. The course is narrated by Justin Constantine, a Marine Corps veteran and leadership consultant. It explains the need for a thoughtful onboarding process, promoting successful veteran orientation and socialization, executive engagement, mentoring and collaboration with sourcing partners. After speaking with both employers and veterans about these programs, we recommend that employer partners provide veteran mentors to new hires within their companies to help them acclimate to the culture. Taking the time to implement a veteran-friendly environment will increase retention of veterans in the company and improve recruitment of transitioning service members.

5.2.3 Target high-growth industries in Los Angeles hiring for positions requiring veteran skill sets

We recommend focusing on creating new employer partnerships within three of the high-growth industries in Los Angeles: high-tech installation, alternative energy, and skilled labor. Over 10,000 high-tech installation jobs will be added in 2016 alone, and although alternative energy is a relatively small player in the job market right now, it has potential to add thousands of installation and maintenance jobs over the next few years. These two industries offer career opportunities that closely align with the veteran skill set that emerged from our research. For example, installation is a highly team-oriented task that requires a high level of attention to detail and the ability to organize and execute a plan. This correlates with the top four strengths cited in our interviews: leadership, teamwork/collaboration, time management, and discipline. Companies in these industries have the most to gain from actively recruiting veterans through 10,000 Strong. In addition, positions requiring skilled labor can utilize specific military technical backgrounds and are often the highest-paying working class jobs. Despite a high-growth projection, we do not recommend targeting the healthcare industry because positions without strict advanced degree requirements are primarily minimum-wage jobs.

6 Appendix

California Technology Employment Annual averages (thousands), March 2014 Benchmark, based on NAICS, not seasonally adjusted

Year	Manufacturing					Services			
	Total Technology Employment	Electronic Product Manufacturing	Aerospace Product & Parts Manufacturing	Pharmaceutical & Medicine Manufacturing	Software Publishers	Data Processing, Hosting & Related Services	Computer Systems Design & Rel. Services	Management, Scientific & Technical Consulting	Scientific R&D Services
2002	922.0	353.7	79.6	39.5	48.8	20.7	177.1	102.1	100.5
2003	876.7	320.9	73.6	39.1	44.7	18.7	168.8	109.7	101.2
2004	877.1	313.4	73.7	40.6	42.6	18.5	168.5	119.0	100.8
2005	902.6	310.8	73.4	42.0	41.6	19.6	175.6	135.4	104.2
2006	932.1	308.2	73.0	44.0	41.3	20.9	187.2	151.3	106.2
2007	950.3	304.1	72.8	44.2	43.0	20.7	198.9	159.0	107.6
2008	970.7	300.0	73.7	43.6	44.9	20.4	205.2	166.8	116.1
2009	924.4	278.6	72.4	43.5	45.0	19.3	194.6	156.1	114.9
2010	930.4	271.8	73.1	43.4	45.0	18.6	199.7	160.5	118.3
2011	960.1	275.2	71.5	43.3	48.3	18.8	212.6	169.7	120.7
2012	999.7	270.0	71.1	44.4	51.9	21.0	228.2	187.5	125.6
2013	1026.9	262.9	72.0	45.6	53.8	23.6	243.6	197.9	127.5
2014	1063.5	262.6	71.4	47.4	55.5	25.4	263.0	208.8	129.4
2015 YTD July	1106.7	265.4	70.1	47.6	57.0	27.1	280.4	222.5	136.6

Los Angeles County Economic Indicators

Year	Population on July 1 (Thousands)	Nonfarm Employment (Ave., thousands)	Unemployment Rate (Ave., %)	Total Personal Income (\$Billions)	Per Capita Personal Income (\$)	Total Taxable Sales (\$Billions)
2003	9,791.0	4,056.3	7.0	323.7	33,145	113.7
2004	9,822.5	4,079.1	6.5	339.2	34,632	122.5
2005	9,809.6	4,119.9	5.4	357.6	36,540	130.7
2006	9,787.3	4,194.5	4.8	384.7	39,508	136.2
2007	9,773.9	4,229.0	5.1	398.3	41,058	137.8
2008	9,796.8	4,185.4	7.6	410.5	42,165	131.9
2009	9,805.2	3,951.0	11.6	395.4	40,396	112.7
2010	9,825.2	3,890.0	12.5	404.5	41,163	116.9
2011	9,862.4	3,911.6	12.2	425.7	43,062	126.4
2012	9,946.9	4,010.5	10.9	455.8	45,800	135.3
2013	10,013.3	4,129.8	9.8	466.1	46,530	140.1
2014	10,069.0	4,226.4	8.3	485.9	48,300	150.0
2015f	10,123.8	4,319.4	7.3	506.4	50,000	156.9
2016f	10,169.1	4,397.1	6.3	527.7	51,900	167.7

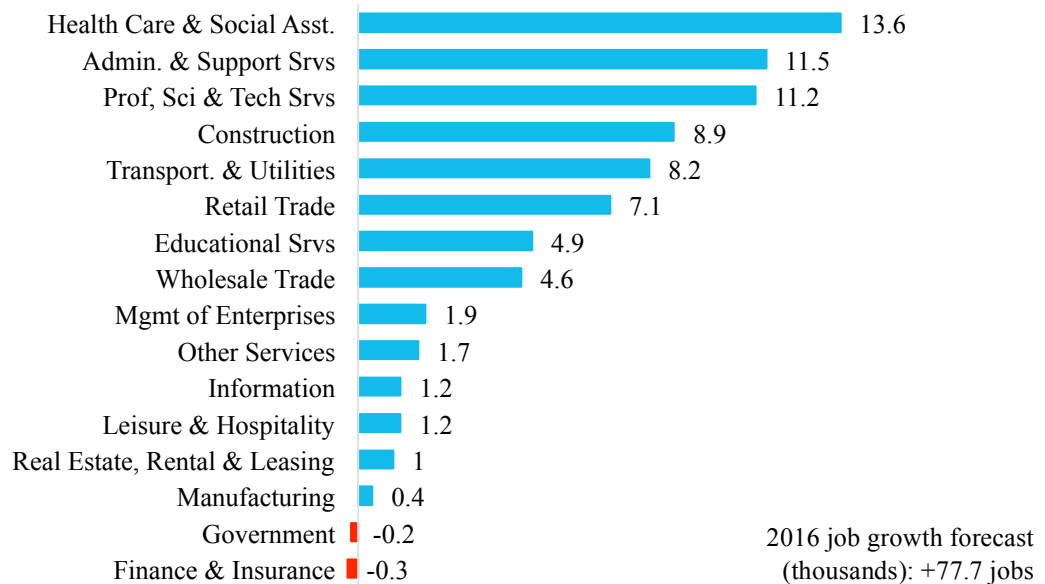
Los Angeles County Nonfarm Employment Annual averages (thousands), March 2014 Benchmark

Year	Total Nonfarm Employment	Natural Resources	Construction	Manufacturing	Mfg. — Durable	Mfg. — Non-durable	Wholesale Trade	Retail Trade	Transport. & Utilities	Information
2003	4,066.3	3.8	134.6	502.2	278.4	223.8	212.4	399.4	161.6	202.4
2004	4,079.1	3.8	140.2	485.9	270.1	215.9	213.4	405.5	161.2	212.0
2005	4,119.9	3.7	148.7	474.0	265.7	208.4	217.6	414.5	161.7	207.7
2006	4,194.5	4.0	157.5	464.1	259.6	204.5	224.0	423.4	165.2	205.7
2007	4,229.0	4.4	157.6	449.4	251.0	198.4	227.4	426.1	165.6	209.9
2008	4,185.4	4.4	145.2	434.7	243.3	191.3	224.1	416.6	163.1	210.4
2009	3,951.0	4.1	117.3	389.3	217.6	171.7	204.8	387.1	151.2	191.3
2010	3,890.0	4.1	104.5	373.3	207.1	166.3	203.4	386.5	150.6	191.6
2011	3,911.6	4.1	105.1	366.9	204.2	162.8	205.8	393.0	151.8	192.0
2012	4,010.5	4.3	109.2	367.4	204.3	163.1	211.9	401.0	154.5	191.5
2013	4,129.8	4.6	116.2	368.2	204.3	163.8	218.7	406.0	157.5	196.4
2014	4,226.4	4.7	120.2	364.9	203.1	161.8	223.5	414.5	162.7	195.9
2015 ^F	4,319.4	4.6	127.3	362.0	201.4	160.6	230.5	423.1	166.8	198.8
2016 ^F	4,397.1	4.6	136.2	362.4	201.4	161.0	235.1	430.2	175.0	200.0

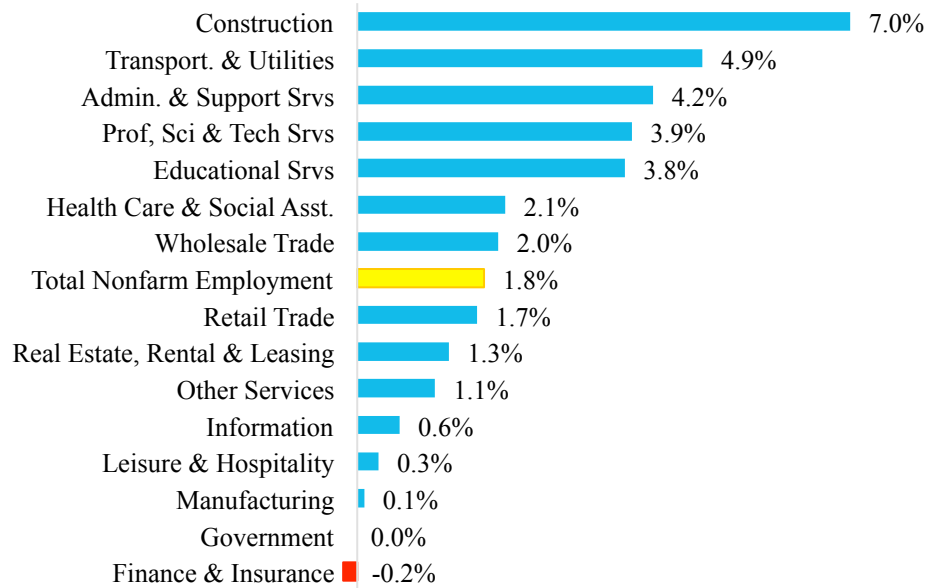
Year	Finance & Insurance	Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	Prof. Sci & Tech Svcs	Mgmt. of Enterprises	Admin. & Support Svcs	Educational Services	Health Care & Social Asst	Leisure & Hospitality	Other Services	Government
2003	163.2	74.9	233.8	77.4	249.5	94.9	438.8	362.7	145.5	599.3
2004	163.1	76.7	238.0	71.2	254.0	95.5	454.3	372.8	144.7	587.1
2005	164.4	77.8	251.2	67.6	258.0	97.5	469.7	377.8	144.3	583.7
2006	167.0	79.8	264.3	63.0	272.3	99.4	481.7	388.6	145.2	589.4
2007	163.7	80.3	274.1	58.8	273.1	102.9	495.1	397.9	147.1	595.7
2008	154.0	79.4	269.8	56.7	256.8	105.1	513.9	401.6	146.1	603.7
2009	142.3	73.8	250.4	54.4	225.6	110.1	529.9	385.6	138.0	595.8
2010	137.9	71.7	245.8	53.2	229.1	111.1	526.2	384.8	136.7	579.6
2011	137.0	71.6	255.8	55.3	232.9	114.3	528.9	394.7	137.0	565.5
2012	138.8	72.2	269.0	56.7	245.9	115.7	558.6	415.4	141.7	556.8
2013	137.1	74.7	278.1	58.2	258.4	119.8	599.8	439.3	145.7	551.2
2014	133.3	76.4	282.9	59.4	267.0	122.8	625.3	464.6	151.7	556.7
2015 ^F	132.9	78.5	287.1	61.2	272.1	129.1	644.5	481.7	154.1	564.8
2016 ^F	132.6	79.5	298.3	63.1	283.6	134.0	658.1	482.9	155.8	564.6

Sources: California Employment Development Department, LMD; estimates and forecasts by LAEDC.

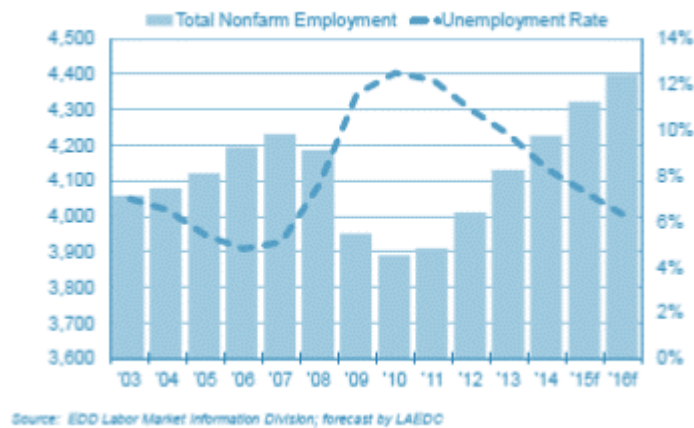
L.A. County Employment Growth, 2016 Absolute Job Growth



L.A. County Employment Growth, 2016 Annual Percent Change



Los Angeles County Employment Annual average (thousands), 2014 Benchmark



Top Cited Veteran Skills (as a percentage of interview responses)		
1	Leadership	63%
2	Teamwork/Collaboration	42%
3	Time Management	21%
4	Discipline	18%
5	Professionalism	15%
6	Mission-focused	15%
7	Project Planning/Management	12%
8	Loyalty	12%
9	Work Ethic	12%
10	Problem Solving	12%
11	Communication	10%
12	Critical Thinking	10%
13	Organization	10%
14	Reliability	7%
15	Initiative	6%
16	Decision Making	6%
17	Attention to Detail	6%
18	Team Building	4%
19	Trainability	4%

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