

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM OPERATIONS MANUAL



**U.S. Department of Labor
Veterans' Employment and
Training Service**

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Transition Assistance Program Operations Manual

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Section 1: Introduction to TAP Operations Manual

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Department of Labor Employment Workshop (DOLEW) Operations Manual is to assist the Department of Labor (DOL) – Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS) and the Department of Defense (DoD) to execute requirements outlined in Public Law 101-510 (codified at 10 U.S.C. §1144) establishing TAP. To ensure the smooth operation and management of the DOLEW, specific requirements and responsibilities for each agency are outlined within this manual.

1.2 DOL (VETS) Philosophy for Operating DOL Employment Workshops

DOL (VETS) considers the DOLEW a vital benefit to service members and their spouses to equip them for a successful transition to meaningful careers in the civilian workforce. The DOLEW is a solid course of instruction designed to lay the foundation and develop the fundamental skills necessary for an effective career transition. Therefore, DOL (VETS) will make every effort, with its available resources, to support the requests for the delivery of the DOLEW from DoD and the military services.

DOL (VETS) is committed to establishing open, ongoing communications with all partners in this multi-agency program necessary to implement the provisions of 10 U.S.C. §1144; to maintain cooperative, cordial relationships with participating agencies and personnel; and to negotiate, at the lowest level possible, constructive and mutually agreeable solutions to any problems that affect the quality of services provided to DOLEW participants.

1.3 Intended Audience

This operations manual is primarily intended for DOL (VETS) staff, the DOL (VETS) TAP facilitation contractor, and the military services’ installation transition assistance staff. These personnel hold the lead roles in assuring successful DOLEW operations at military installations and other locations worldwide.

1.4 Sources of Information

Information in this manual reflects guidance provided in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among the Departments of Labor, Defense, Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security (U.S. Coast Guard), Education, Small Business Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management. In addition, information was gathered from DOL (VETS) and DoD personnel who are knowledgeable of TAP and DOLEW operations.

1.5 Organization of the Operations Manual

This manual is organized into sections that reflect the major tasks DOL (VETS) and its partners should perform to carry out their DOL (VETS) TAP Employment Workshop responsibilities. The Appendices contain important reference and operational documents such as:

- National TAP MOU dated January 31, 2014 (Appendix 1),
- DOL Local TAP MOU template (Appendix 2),
- Sample DOLEW Delivery Order (Appendix 3),
- DOLEW Change Request form (Appendix 4),
- TAP Assessment Tool dated Sep 29, 2014 (Appendix 5),
- DOLEW Participant Guide Request form (Appendix 6).

Section 2: Program Background

The National TAP Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) dated January 31, 2014, Appendix 1, provides detailed background information on the overall Transition Assistance Program as well as the joint and agency-specific responsibilities of the program partners. The following is general information excerpted from that document.

2.1 Historical Background

VETS began providing the Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshop in 1991, pursuant to section 502 of the National Defense Authorization Act, and to date VETS has provided employment and job training assistance and other transitional service to over 2.5 million separating and retiring service members and their spouses. The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) provides information, tools, and training to ensure service members are prepared for the next step in civilian life whether pursuing additional education, finding a job in the public or private sector, or starting their own business.

2.2 VOW Act of 2011

On November 21, 2011, President Obama signed into law the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011. Section 221 of the “VOW Act” amended section 1144 of Title 10, U.S.C. making participation in the DOL TAP employment workshop mandatory for all transitioning service members except certain exempted members determined by the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of Homeland Security. The effective date for this amendment was November 21, 2012.

Current exemptions to the DOLEW, as determined by the Secretary of Defense, are:

1. Eligible service members retiring after 20 or more years of active federal service in the Military Departments.
2. Eligible service members, who, after serving their first 180 continuous days or more on active duty, pursuant to Title 10 U.S.C., meet at least one of the following:
 - Are able to provide documented evidence of civilian employment.
 - Are able to provide documented acceptance into an accredited career technical training, undergraduate, or graduate degree program.

- Have specialized skills which, due to unavoidable circumstances, are needed to support a unit on orders scheduled to deploy within 60 days. The first commander in the eligible service members' chain of command, with authority pursuant to Chapter 47 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), must certify on the DD Form 2958 any such request for exemption from the DOLEW. A make-up plan must accompany the postponement certification.
- Eligible recovering service members who are separating, retiring, or being released from active duty, who are enrolled in the Education and Employment Initiative, or similar transition program designed to secure employment, higher education, or career technical training post-separation.
- Eligible Reserve Component service members who have previously participated in the DOLEW.

Section 223 of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 requires the Secretary of Labor to enter into a contract with a private entity or entities to provide for the facilitation of the DOL TAP employment workshop. The deadline for implementation of this requirement was not later than November 21, 2013.

In accordance with the VOW Act of 2011, VETS uses contract facilitators to deliver all of the DOLEW.

2.3 VEI Task Force and Transition GPS

In September of 2011, the White House convened the DoD-VA Veterans' Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force. This task force was given the charge of revising and improving the overall Transition Assistance Program to meet the goal of having career-ready transitioning service members. DOL (VETS) was an integral partner in the work of the task force. The task force completed a significant redesign of the Transition Assistance Program, the first since its inception in 1991. The redesigned TAP focuses on making service members career-ready, and introduces certain Career Readiness Standards (CRS). The center piece of the redesigned TAP is the Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success). Transition GPS includes components designed to make service members career ready prior to separation through mandatory and elective curricula modules. The components of Transition GPS are: 1) Pre-separation Counseling, 2) Transition GPS Core Curricula, 3) Transition GPS Tracks, and 4) Capstone.

The Transition GPS Core Curricula are:

- Transition Overview (administered by DoD)
- Resilient Transitions (administered by DoD)
 - Considerations for Families
 - Special Issues
 - Value of a Mentor
 - Support Systems
 - Stress Management
- Military Occupational Code (MOC) Crosswalk (administered by DoD)
- Personal Financial Planning (administered by DoD)
- VA Benefits Briefings I and II (administered by VA)
- DOL Employment Workshop (administered by DOL)
- Individual Transition Plan (ITP) Review (administered by DoD)

The Transition GPS Tracks are:

- Accessing Higher Education (administered by DoD)
- Career Technical Training (administered by VA)
- Entrepreneurship (administered by SBA)

Capstone: Shall occur no later than 90 days prior to separation and serves to verify that service members have met their CRS through their ITPs. Exceptions are:

- In the case of an eligible Active Component service member’s rapid/short-notice separation, of 30 days or fewer prior to discharge or release from active duty, Capstone shall occur no later than the date of separation as reflected on the DD Form 214.
- In the case of eligible Reserve Component service members released from active duty, in which operational requirements, make the prescribed timeline unfeasible, a final DD Form 2958 be completed no later than the date of release from active duty as reflected on the DD Form 214.

2.4 DOL Employment Workshop (DOLEW)

DOL (VETS) primary responsibility as a partner agency in TAP is to deliver high quality contractor facilitated DOLEW to transitioning service members and their spouses at military installations and other locations worldwide as requested by DoD and the military services (including the U.S. Coast Guard).

The objective of the DOLEW is to lay a solid foundation of the fundamental skills needed for a successful transition to civilian employment. The employment workshop curriculum was redesigned in FY 2012. The DOLEW is a 3-day workshop tightly focused on the mechanics of attaining and retaining employment.

The DOLEW consists of the following sections:

- Section 1: Transition Planning
- Section 2: Career Exploration & Validation
- Section 3: Job Search Plan
- Section 4: Build an Effective Resume
- Section 5: Federal Hiring Process
- Section 6: Skilled Interview
- Section 7: Interview Post-Analysis

Section 3: Establishing Local TAP MOU

The National TAP MOU dated January 31, 2014, Appendix 1, directs the military service branches to develop a local MOU between individual installations and the appropriate partner agencies. The TAP Executive Council (EC) approved the military services' request to change this from an across-the-board requirement to a case-by-case decision.

DOL VETS developed and cleared a template for use as the local MOU. Use of the cleared template authorizes the **Director of Veterans' Employment and Training (DVET)** to sign as the DOL representative. The signed local TAP MOU will not require further clearance as long as the following conditions apply:

1. The template will be used only with military installations to coordinate delivery of the DOLEW and support of TAP.
2. Amending the MOU template to include installation-specific information on access for VETS federal staff or VETS' contract facilitators, or coordination of site visits by VETS federal staff will not constitute a substantive change to the template provided it does not establish any funding agreement.
3. Any agreement for support of Capstone events from an individual state workforce agency may not be included in this template. Capstone event support must be a separate agreement between the military installation and the state workforce agency.
4. VETS Office of National Programs (ONP) strongly recommends using the template without substantive changes. Any substantive changes to the template for a particular MOU will require lengthy official Departmental clearance. If in doubt about whether a proposed change is substantive, contact ONP.
5. Per DLMS 3-1718, a signed copy of every MOU based on the approved template will be submitted by VETS to OASAM/PMC.

The following actions should take place with regard to establishing local TAP MOU:

1. Regional Administrators (RAs) will ensure all DVETs receive a copy of the National TAP MOU dated January 31, 2014 (Appendix 1) and the Local TAP MOU Template (Appendix 2).
2. DVETs shall reach out to their respective military installations to determine the need for a local TAP MOU.
3. DVETs will ensure that only the approved template is used for the local MOU between an installation and DOL, and that the conditions outlined above are met.

4. RAs will ensure that a signed copy of every MOU based on the approved template is forwarded to the VETS Office of National Programs TAP Lead within 10 working days of the last signature obtained.
5. In the instance of a substantive change to the template, DVETs shall forward the proposed change to VETS Office of National Programs TAP Lead through their Regional Administrator.

Section 4: Scheduling DOLEW

4.1 Background

VETS conducts the DOLEW at locations and at frequencies based on the schedules and requests received from the military services (including U.S. Coast Guard). Since VETS is required to use contracted facilitators, delivery of the DOLEW to transitioning service members is done by means of task orders issued to the facilitation contractor. The task order includes funding and a comprehensive delivery order of all DOLEW scheduled at military installations worldwide for the period of that task order.

The DOLEW task orders may not follow a strict quarterly format. The timing and duration of DOLEW task orders are intended to ensure VETS fully expends all appropriated TAP funds for the FY, avoids end-of-FY procurement emergencies, and maintains continuity of service of the scheduled workshops. In FY 2012, VETS re-programmed additional funds from JVSG to TAP in order to extend task orders through the 1st quarter of a FY to mitigate effects of Continuing Resolutions on funds availability.

Generally, DOLEW task orders will adhere to the following periods of performance:

1. Task Order 1: Q2 of FY (Jan 1 – Mar 31)
2. Task Order 2: Q3(+) of FY (Apr 1 – July 31)
3. Task Order 3: Q4 of FY/Q1 of next FY (Aug 1 – Dec 31)

4.2 Task Order Schedule

The foundation of the DOLEW task order is the schedule of workshops for the respective period of performance. It establishes the dates, locations, and number of DOLEW requested by the military services. It is imperative that the schedule be thorough and accurate. The following outlines the scheduling process for CONUS DOLEW and OCONUS DOLEW.

4.2.1 CONUS DOLEW Scheduling: This covers military installations located in the CONUS, plus AK, HI, PR, and Guam.

1. Sixty (60) days prior to start of task order, the ONP TAP Lead sends email to the RAs requesting the DOLEW schedule input for the military installations in

their respective states. The email requests consolidated schedules. The DOLEW schedule template (Appendix 3) is sent as an attachment. RAs forward the request to their respective DVETs for action.

2. Forty five (45) days prior to start of task order, consolidated schedules from regions are sent to the ONP TAP Analyst. The ONP TAP Analyst consolidates regional schedules into a master DOLEW schedule. The task order schedule is the basis for determining funding level necessary for the task order.
3. Thirty (30) days prior to the start of a task order, ONP TAP Lead submits Purchase Request to award new task order. DOL Office of Procurement Services awards new task order NLT fifteen (15) days prior to start of the new task order period of performance, and the schedule is sent to the contractor.
4. Once the ONP TAP Lead submits the Purchase Request, any changes to the task order schedule must be done using the Change Request (CR) form. Changes include – requests for additional DOLEW classes/facilitators, deletion of a previously scheduled DOLEW, or requests to change dates or locations of scheduled DOLEW. The Change Request submission process is addressed later in this section.
5. The fluid nature of return dates for Reserve/National Guard demobilizing units presents a challenge for scheduling on the original DOLEW delivery order. In those cases where it is not possible to schedule DOLEW for demobilizing Reserve/National Guard units on the original delivery order, DVETs will follow the Change Request Submission process.

4.2.2 OCONUS DOLEW Scheduling: This covers all military installations not included on the CONUS schedule.

1. Sixty (60) days prior to start of task order, the ONP TAP Lead sends an email to the individual military services' TAP Program Managers requesting the DOLEW schedule input for their overseas installations. The email requests consolidated schedules. The DOLEW schedule template (Appendix 3) is sent as an attachment.
2. Forty five (45) days prior to start of task order, the military services' overseas schedules are sent to the ONP TAP Analyst. ONP TAP Analyst consolidates the overseas schedules and CONUS schedules into a master DOLEW schedule.

The task order schedule is the basis for determining funding level necessary for the task order.

3. Thirty (30) days prior to start of task order, ONP TAP Lead submits Purchase Request to award new task order. DOL Office of Procurement Services awards new task order NLT fifteen (15) days prior to start of new task order period of performance, and the schedule is sent to the contractor.
4. Once the ONP TAP Lead submits the Purchase Request any changes to the task order schedule must be done using the Change Request form. Changes include: requests for additional DOLEW classes/facilitators, deletion of a previously scheduled DOLEW, or requests to change dates or locations of scheduled DOLEW. The Change Request submission process is addressed later in this section.

4.3 Change Request Process

Because of the large number of military installations, deployments, training requirements, inclement weather, etc., changes to the submitted task order schedule are inevitable. To ensure proper coordination of the workshops, accurate contractual documentation, and timely tracking of task order funds expenditures VETS uses a Change Request form (Appendix 4) and process. As noted above, changes include – requests for additional DOLEW classes/facilitators, deletion of a previously scheduled DOLEW or facilitator, or requests to change dates or locations.

4.3.1 CONUS Change Request Process: Changes must be done using the Change Request form (Appendix 4)

1. Military service transition personnel submit change request (CR) form to respective DVET (or designated representative).
 - a. Per the TAP MOU, changes are to be submitted no less than ten (10) business days prior to the start date of the DOLEW.
 - b. VETS will make every effort to support short-notice requests; however, we cannot guarantee approval of such requests.
2. DVET ensures CR is filled out correctly and forwards to Regional TAP POC
3. Regional TAP POC forwards CR to ONP TAP Analyst at TAP Admin email tapadmin@dol.gov

4. ONP TAP Analyst coordinates CR with contractor to verify support and any additional associated travel costs.
5. Once coordination with contractor is complete, the ONP TAP Lead or the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) will sign the CR as approval. If the CR is not approved, ONP TAP Lead will notify the Regional TAP POC of the disapproval and reasons.
6. ONP TAP Analyst scans the signed CR and emails copy to Regional POC and contractor. ONP TAP Analyst makes change to master task order DOLEW schedule.
7. Regional POC forwards scanned copy of approval to DVET, who forwards to requesting military service to complete the process.

4.3.2 OCONUS Change Request Process: Changes must be done using the Change Request form (Appendix 3).

1. Military service transition personnel submit change request (CR) form to ONP TAP Analyst at the TAP Admin email tapadmin@dol.gov .
 - a. Per the TAP MOU, changes are to be submitted no less than ten (10) business days prior to the start date of the DOLEW.
 - b. VETS will make every effort to support short-notice requests; however, we cannot guarantee approval of such requests.
2. ONP TAP Analyst coordinates CR with contractor to verify support and any additional associated travel costs.
3. Once coordination with contractor is complete, the ONP TAP Lead or the COR will sign the CR as the approval. If the CR is not approved, ONP TAP Lead will notify the requesting service of the disapproval and reasons.
4. ONP TAP Analyst scans the signed CR and emails copy to requesting service and contractor to complete the process. ONP TAP Analyst makes change to master task order DOLEW schedule.

Section 5: Ordering DOLEW Participant Guide Manuals

DOL VETS is responsible for the printing and distribution of DOLEW materials. The DOLEW Participant Guide is provided to each workshop participant. Military installations are encouraged to maintain a 3-month supply of participant guides if storage space allows. They may order more if they are able to store the material.

CONUS Procedures For Ordering DOLEW Participant Guides:

1. Quarterly, DVETs will inquire of their respective military installations on the status of DOLEW material on hand.
2. DVETs will submit one statewide order to their Regional TAP POC using the DOLEW Participant Guide Order Form (Appendix 6).
3. The Regional TAP POC will place the order on the VETS outreach material web site within 48 hours of receipt.

OCONUS Procedures For Ordering DOLEW Participant Guides:

Overseas military installations are encouraged to maintain a 3-month supply of DOLEW Participant Guides to ensure adequate inventory. Installations may order more if they are able to store the material. Installation transition services personnel should:

1. Submit DOLEW Participant Guide requests using the DOLEW Participant Guide Order Form (Appendix 6) to the TAP Admin email address tapadmin@dol.gov.
2. The ONP TAP Analyst receives order request and places order within 48 hours of receipt.
3. The ONP TAP Analyst notifies the requestor once order has been placed.

Section 6: Conducting TAP Site Visits

Background: In FY 2014, VETS implemented a standardized assessment tool and process for the TAP DOLEW (Appendix 5). The tool required federal staff to rate the facility and facilitator using a scale of disagree to strongly agree. Additionally, under this process, each day spent at a TAP site was considered a single assessment, regardless of the number of classrooms or facilitators reviewed.

Updates: In June 2014, the Regional Administrators met with the Office of Agency Management and Budget to propose changes to the tool and process. As a result, the following changes took effect on October 1, 2014.

1. **Defining an Assessment.** An assessment is defined as the review of a facilitator. Federal staff may assess more than one facilitator per visit and submit a completed assessment tool for each facilitator.
2. **Facility Review.** Instead of reviewing the five (5) facility factors on a scale from disagree to strongly agree, they are reviewed on a “yes/no” basis. Additionally, the tool will not calculate a facility score. Federal staff are encouraged to provide comments on facilities when appropriate, and it is required to provide comments for any “no” selections on the assessment.
3. **Facilitator Review.** The scale for facilitator review has been altered to remove the “strongly agree” option. **Additionally, comments regarding the facilitator are mandatory, regardless of the overall score.** The comments are an opportunity to communicate challenges or best practices to VETS management.

Assessment Tool Submission: Federal staff must use the electronic assessment tool (Appendix 5). This tool contains two (2) tabs: the first tab is the tool; the second tab provides a guide for using the tool. The tool is uploaded into the Veterans’ Employment and Training Operations and Program Activity Report (VOPAR) system, by the reviewer, within thirty (30) days of the assessment.

1. This form is required for all TAP DOLEW Assessments conducted after October 1, 2014.
2. Regional Administrators will provide assessment results and feedback to the COR for the TAP facilitation contract, and Deputy Director of ONP. This

will ensure any issues requiring remediation are immediately acted upon by the contractor.

Section 7: Providing Technical Assistance

The purpose of technical assistance is to ensure program success by providing information and resources to resolve problems that may hinder performance. Technical assistance generally consists of three (3) broad categories of activity: responding to inquiries, helping to resolve conflicts, and solving resource and other problems.

Inquiries to the VETS National Office should be submitted to the TAP Admin email address, tapadmin@dol.gov. The ONP TAP staff will respond to email inquiries within 48 hours.

Open and regular communication between TAP partner agencies at all levels is key to ensuring a successful program. DVETs should initiate and maintain close working relationships with the military services' installation TAP managers in their respective states.

1. If resources and funding allow, regular meetings should be held with the installation-level TAP partner agencies.
2. DVETs should review task order schedules with their respective installation TAP managers on a monthly basis to ensure all scheduled DOLEW are included on the schedules and any changes are noted and coordinated.
3. Regular communication with demobilization sites is especially important with the fluid nature of demobilization schedules.

Section 8: Appendices

Appendices may be accessed at <http://www.dol.gov/vets/tapops/>

Appendix 1. TAP MOU dated January 31, 2014

[http://www.dol.gov/vets/tapops/documents/APPENDIX_1-TAP MOU Final Signed Jan 31 2014.pdf](http://www.dol.gov/vets/tapops/documents/APPENDIX_1-TAP_MOU_Final_Signed_Jan_31_2014.pdf)

Appendix 2. Local TAP MOU Template

http://www.dol.gov/vets/tapops/documents/APPENDIX_2-Local_TAP_MOU_Template.doc

Appendix 3. Sample DOLEW Delivery Order

[http://www.dol.gov/vets/tapops/documents/APPENDIX_3-Sample DOLEW Delivery Order Template.xls](http://www.dol.gov/vets/tapops/documents/APPENDIX_3-Sample_DOLEW_Delivery_Order_Template.xls)

Appendix 4. Change Request Form

[http://www.dol.gov/vets/tapops/documents/APPENDIX_4-DOLEW Change Request Form \(12-05-2014\).pdf](http://www.dol.gov/vets/tapops/documents/APPENDIX_4-DOLEW_Change_Request_Form_(12-05-2014).pdf)

Appendix 5. TAP Assessment Tool Sept_29_2014

http://www.dol.gov/vets/tapops/documents/APPENDIX_5-TAP_Assessment_Tool_Sept_29_2014.xls

Appendix 6. DOLEW Participant Guide Order Form

[http://www.dol.gov/vets/tapops/documents/APPENDIX_6-DOLEW Participant Guide Request Form.doc](http://www.dol.gov/vets/tapops/documents/APPENDIX_6-DOLEW_Participant_Guide_Request_Form.doc)