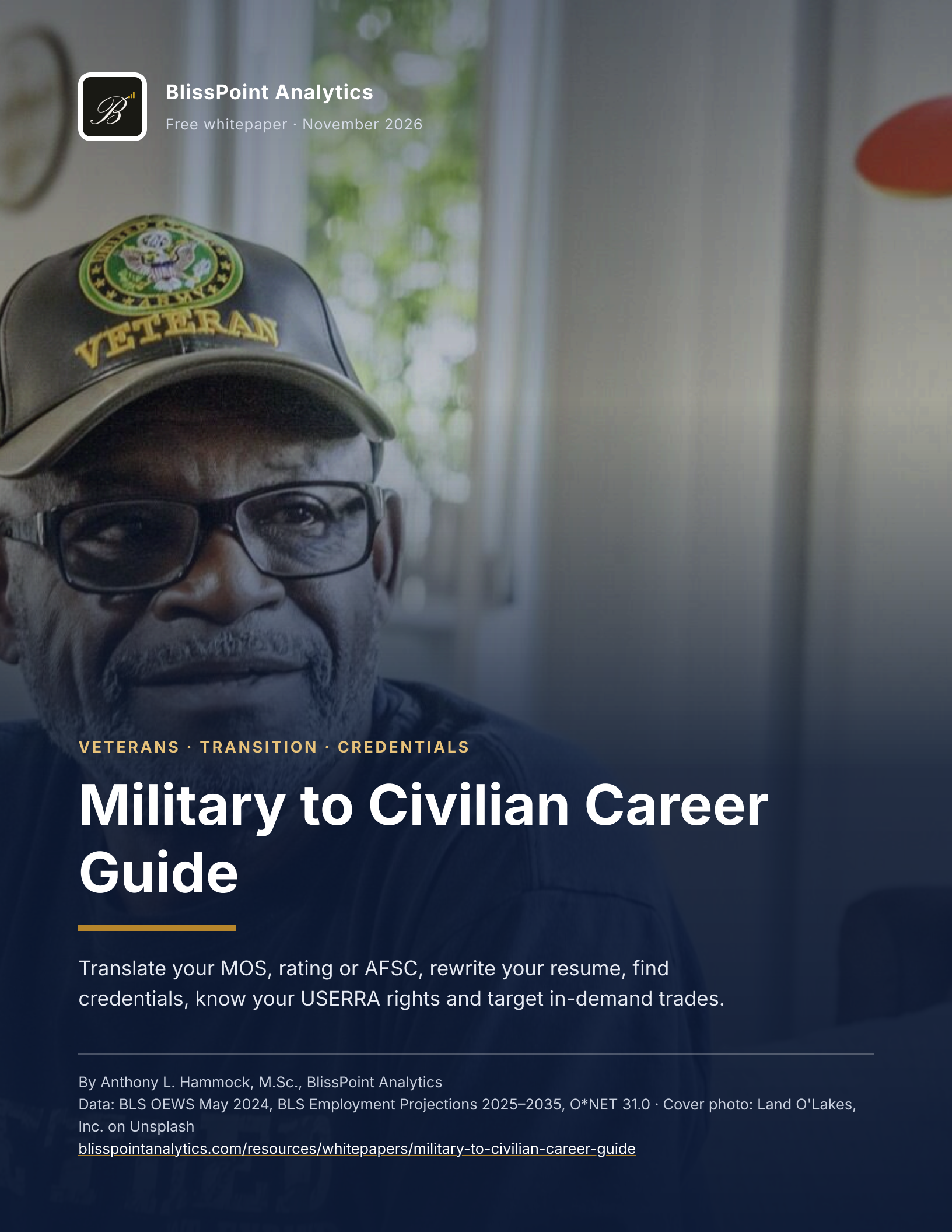


BlissPoint Analytics
Free whitepaper · November 2026

VETERANS · TRANSITION · CREDENTIALS

Military to Civilian Career Guide

Translate your MOS, rating or AFSC, rewrite your resume, find credentials, know your USERRA rights and target in-demand trades.

By Anthony L. Hammock, M.Sc., BlissPoint Analytics
Data: BLS OEWS May 2024, BLS Employment Projections 2025–2035, O*NET 31.0 · Cover photo: Land O'Lakes, Inc. on Unsplash
blisspointanalytics.com/resources/whitepapers/military-to-civilian-career-guide

Executive summary

Veterans do well in the civilian job market, but the move takes translation: from military codes to civilian job titles, from military language to resume language, and from military training to civilian credentials. This guide covers each step with official sources and free tools.

17.3M
veterans in the U.S. in 2025 (BLS)

3.5%
veteran unemployment rate in 2025, against 4.2% for nonveterans

+29.5%
projected growth for wind turbine service technicians, the fastest of the trades in this guide

The five moves

1. Translate your MOS, rating or AFSC with O*NET
2. Rewrite your resume in civilian terms
3. Turn training into credentials (COOL)
4. Know your USERRA rights
5. Target in-demand fields with BLS data



Photo: Navy Medicine on Unsplash.

Source for the first two figures: BLS, Employment Situation of Veterans 2025 (released April 28, 2026; 2025 annual figures are 11-month averages because October 2025 data weren't collected during the federal shutdown). General information, not legal or tax advice.

01 Veterans in the labor market

What the latest BLS release says.

Unemployment rate, 2025 annual average



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Situation of Veterans, 2025.

In 2025, 17.3 million people in the United States were veterans, about 7 percent of the civilian noninstitutional population aged 18 and over. Their unemployment rate rose to 3.5 percent, still below the 4.2 percent for nonveterans; for Gulf War-era II veterans (service since September 2001) it was 3.6 percent.

> Low unemployment isn't the same as the right job. The work of transition is matching what you did to work that uses it, at the right level and pay.

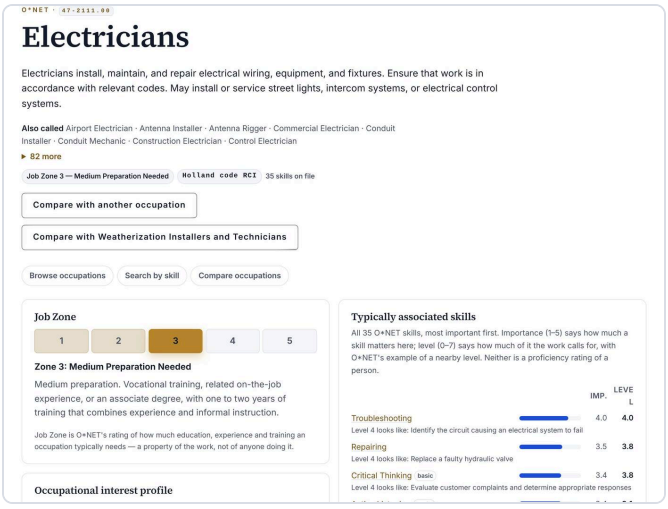
Why translation matters: military titles often undersell civilian scope. A junior leader may have supervised a team, managed costly equipment or run a safety program. Employers reading a resume can't see that unless it's written in their terms.

02 Translate your MOS, rating or AFSC

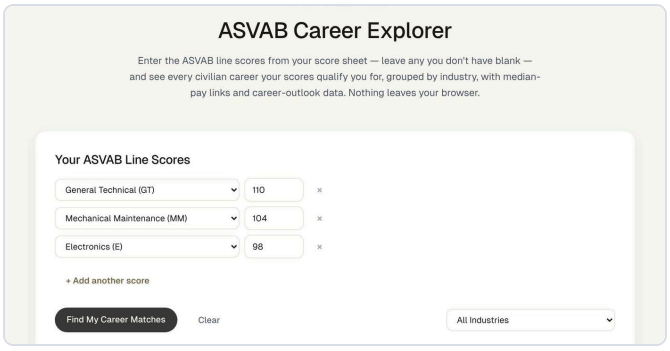
Use O*NET's official Military Crosswalk Search.

The U.S. Department of Labor's O*NET program publishes a Military Crosswalk Search. Choose your branch, enter your code or title, and it returns the related civilian O*NET occupations. It covers the Army (MOS), Navy (ratings), Air Force (AFSC), Marine Corps (MOS), Coast Guard (ratings) and Space Force (SFSC).

1. **Look up your code** in O*NET's Military Crosswalk Search and list every civilian occupation it returns.
2. **Open each in the Occupation Atlas** to compare its tasks and skills with what you actually did, and check BLS pay and outlook.
3. **Search by skill** with the skills index when your job has no obvious civilian twin: troubleshooting, equipment maintenance or coordination carry across.
4. **Check aptitudes** with your ASVAB line scores in the free ASVAB crosswalk, if you still have your score sheet. Use it to explore; employers don't ask for scores.



An Atlas page (Electricians): Job Zone, interest profile and skills.



The free ASVAB crosswalk on BlissPoint Access, with example scores.

O*NET OnLine couldn't be reached from the environment this paper was built in, so it isn't pictured; its description here is checked through search results quoting the site.

03 Translate your resume

Same achievements, civilian words.

Military phrasing	Civilian phrasing
NCOIC of a 12-person section	Supervised a team of 12; set daily priorities, trained new staff and ran performance reviews
Responsible for $2M of TA-50 and vehicles	Accountable for $2 million in equipment and vehicles with zero loss at inventory
Conducted PMCS on wheeled vehicles	Performed preventive maintenance and inspections on a fleet of trucks
Served as unit safety representative	Ran the workplace safety program: inspections, training and incident reporting
Deployed in support of OPERATION ...	Delivered [result] under tight deadlines in a high-pressure environment

Illustrative examples; numbers are placeholders for your own.

Tips that work

- **Lead with the civilian title** that O*NET's crosswalk suggests, then the military one in brackets.
- **Quantify:** people led, budget or equipment value, error rates, time saved.
- **Mirror the job posting:** use its words for the same skills.
- **Cut acronyms** or spell them out once.
- **List credentials and clearances** near the top; many employers screen for them.

In the interview

Expect behavioral questions ("Tell me about a time you..."). Military examples are fully valid evidence. Describe the situation, what you did and the result, and translate acronyms as you go. Employers using structured interviews score what was done, not whether it sounds corporate.

Employers: the free hiring veterans guide explains how to read military experience fairly.

04 Credentials: DoD COOL

Turn military training into civilian licenses and certifications.

Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) is the Department of Defense's portal at cool.osd.mil, with service sites for the Army, Navy, Air Force and Space Force, and Marine Corps. COOL sites connect military occupations to related civilian credentials, and the services can fund some of them for eligible members.

Service	What the official sources say
Air Force and Space Force	AF COOL serves enlisted Air Force and Space Force members; funding is requested through the member's Air Force Virtual Education Center account, and results must be reported afterward.
Marine Corps	A March 2026 MARADMIN says Marine Corps COOL funding is provided on a first come, first served basis.
Army and Navy	Each runs its own COOL site, linked from cool.osd.mil, with credentials mapped to MOS and ratings.

Funding levels, eligible credentials and eligibility windows change: check the current guidance on cool.osd.mil and your service's site before you apply. Checked through search results.

> **Do it before you separate.** Funding generally applies to current service members, so map your credentials while still serving: find your code on your service's COOL site, pick the credentials civilian job postings ask for, and plan the exams.

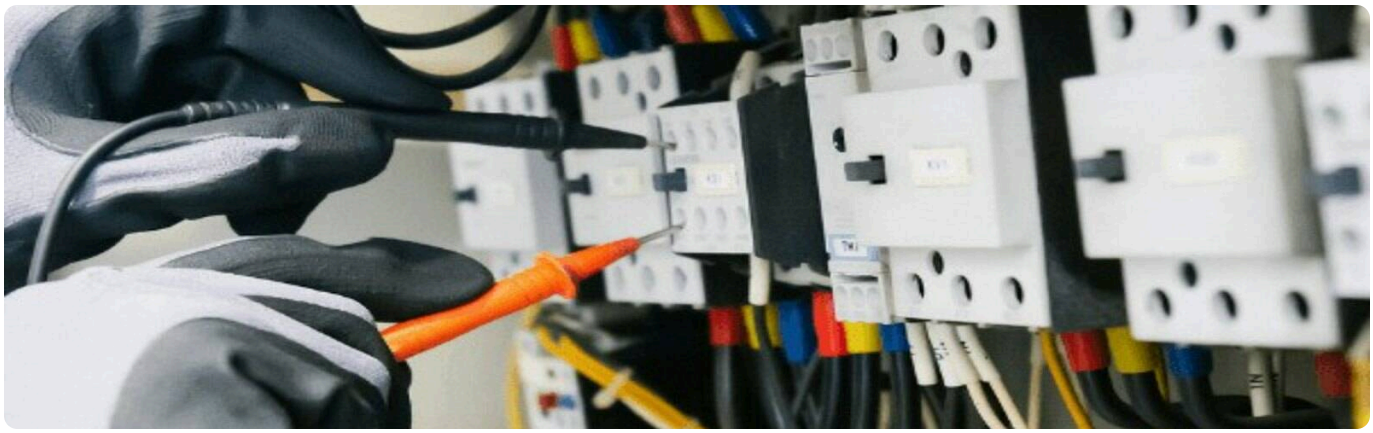


Photo: Toolmash Expo on Unsplash.

05 Know your rights: USERRA

Read on dol.gov. General information, not legal or tax advice.

The **Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act** protects civilian job rights and benefits for veterans and members of the active and Reserve components. The Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) summarizes it:

No discrimination

Employers may not deny hiring, reemployment, retention, promotion or other employment benefits because of past, present or future military service, or retaliate against anyone who helps enforce USERRA rights.

Reemployment, if you meet the conditions

- You left the civilian job for uniformed service.
- You gave advance notice (unless military necessity made it impossible or unreasonable).
- Your cumulative service with that employer is five years or less.
- You were not released under dishonorable or other punitive conditions.
- You reported back or applied on time; for service of 181 days or more, within 90 days after it ends.

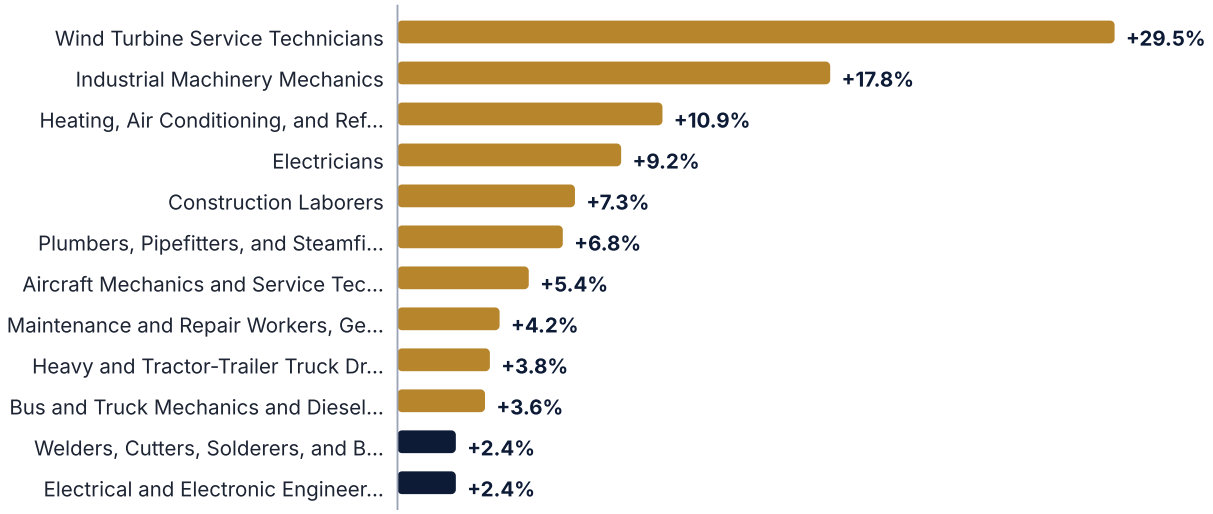
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, VETS: USERRA, Know your rights. General information, not legal or tax advice. For your situation, contact DOL VETS or a qualified adviser.

> USERRA is about the job you left. For the next one, your best evidence is the work you did and the credentials you earned.

06 In-demand trades

BLS pay and projections for skilled trades veterans often enter.

Projected employment change 2025–2035 (all occupations +3.5%)



Source: BLS Employment Projections 2025–35. Gold: at or above the all-occupations average.

Occupation (opens the Occupation Atlas)	Median pay	Growth 25–35	Employment
Wind Turbine Service Technicians	$62,580	+29.5%	11,220
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	$63,760	+17.8%	421,940
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	$59,810	+10.9%	396,870
Electricians	$62,350	+9.2%	742,580
Construction Laborers	$46,730	+7.3%	1,057,660
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	$62,970	+6.8%	455,940
Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	$78,680	+5.4%	136,390
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	$48,620	+4.2%	1,531,700
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	$57,440	+3.8%	2,070,480
Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	$60,640	+3.6%	287,230
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	$51,000	+2.4%	424,040
Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technologists and Technicians	$77,180	+2.4%	92,710

BLS OEWS May 2024 national median pay and employment; BLS projected change 2025–2035. Small fields can grow fast with few openings; large ones can offer many openings at modest growth.

07 Beyond the trades

Other paths veterans often explore.

Occupation (opens the Occupation Atlas)	Median pay	Growth 25–35	Employment
Registered Nurses	$93,600	+5.6%	3,282,010
Emergency Medical Technicians	$41,340	+5.8%	177,980
Information Security Analysts	$124,910	+21.0%	179,430
Computer User Support Specialists	$60,340	-3.5%	697,210
Logisticians	$80,880	+17.6%	235,640
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	$76,290	+3.5%	666,990
Construction Managers	$106,980	+9.1%	348,330
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	$49,210	-5.6%	1,455,770

Pay and outlook

Median annual wage (U.S.)	$62,350
Employment (U.S.)	742,580
Projected employment change, 2025–2035	+9.2%, faster than the 3.5% for all occupations

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2024 national estimates and Employment Projections 2025–2035, for SOC 47-2111 (Electricians). Pay varies by location, employer and experience.

Every Atlas page shows BLS pay and outlook with sources.

Match the level, not just the field

Check each occupation's Job Zone in the Atlas. A senior NCO or officer may fit supervisory and manager roles (such as Construction Managers or Logisticians) rather than entry-level ones in the same field.

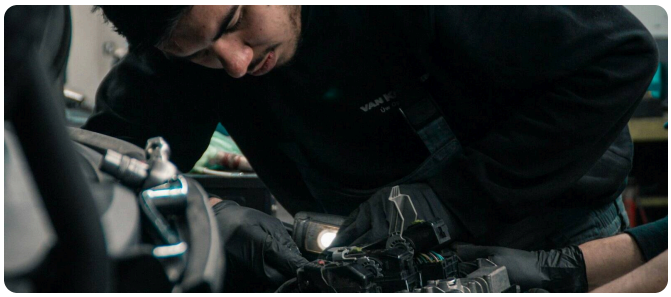


Photo: Sten Rademaker on Unsplash.

What to do next

1. **This week:** look up your code in O*NET's Military Crosswalk Search and shortlist five civilian occupations.
2. **This month:** read each in the Occupation Atlas, rewrite your resume for the top two and find their credentials on your COOL site.
3. **Before you separate:** book credential exams while COOL funding may apply, and keep copies of training records and evaluations.

Hiring veterans guide
How employers read military experience, with the laws and credits to know.

Occupation Atlas
O*NET tasks, skills and BLS pay for every occupation.

Free ASVAB crosswalk
See civilian careers that fit your line scores.

Search by skill
Find occupations that use skills you already have.

ASVAB civilian career bridge
Line score guides and civilian jobs for each score.

2030 future skills calculator
Skills employers expect to grow by 2030.

The Complete ASVAB Line Score Guide
What each line score measures.

For employers: Organization Viewer
Free for companies of up to 50 people.



For employers: Hiring veterans: a guide for HR leaders and founders.

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References 2, 3, 4, 5 were checked through search results quoting the publisher, because those sites were not reachable when this paper was built. Pay is the BLS OEWS national median annual wage for May 2024; growth is the BLS projected employment change 2025–2035 (all occupations +3.5%). Unemployment figures are BLS 2025 annual averages.

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- Navy Medicine, https://unsplash.com/photos/kvaCBD-3Itg, Unsplash License.
- Screenshots: public pages of blisspointanalytics.com and the free ASVAB crosswalk on blisspointaccess.com, captured November 2026.

About BlissPoint Analytics

BlissPoint Analytics builds workforce analytics tools grounded in industrial and organizational psychology: Organization Viewer for org charts, costs and workforce planning, the free Occupation Atlas, the free ASVAB career guides and free calculators. It was founded by Anthony L. Hammock, M.Sc., a 20+ year Industrial and Organizational Psychology consultant, software developer, and Brandeis University graduate studies professor of Talent Insights and Workforce Metrics.

What is BlissPoint Analytics? · Pricing (free up to 50 people) · Occupation Atlas

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