

Safety and Market Development – Gate 3: Executive Summary

Applicant Information		Docket Number: 22500	
Project Title: PERC Region 2 Military Education & Recruitment Program			
Lead Vendor: Jesse Lord		Title: Co-Founder & Executive Director	
Organization: Vets 2 Techs (V.E.T.S.)			
Email: Jesse@vets2techs.com		Telephone: (570) 575-4184	
Amount Requested: \$196,337.00		Total Project Cost: \$293,040.00	
Other Funding Organizations/Amounts: \$96,703 by State Associations in Region 2; 1/3 of the total project cost is funded by the states in that region			
Start Date: 05/01/2020		End Date: 08/01/2021	
PERC Team Leader: Bridget Kidd			
Additional Vendors:		Contact information:	

Executive Summary (completed by PERC staff)

Project Summary

- ☐ Describe the proposed product or idea, its importance, its benefits, and the market and/or audience it serves. Briefly outline the scope of work. If applicable, describe the key messages and deliverables, including who, what, where, and how they are delivered. Please limit response to 500 words.

Veteran Education & Transition Services (V.E.T.S.) proposes to partner together and help Region 2 (NPGA state associations of NY, PA, NJ, VA, DE & MD) with the education, training and outreach necessary to increase military recruitment into the propane industry. V.E.T.S. will provide education to propane companies and associations on the many federal and state funded programs available to both veterans and their employers. Examples of benefits include but are not limited to;

- Federal continuing education funding sources & how to access them
- Federal sponsored health insurance
- Housing and/or food allowance stipends for veterans, and how it plays into propane company compensation plan for veteran new hires and current employees
- Federal tax credits for hiring / employing veterans
- Career and self-development training

Overwhelming majority of propane companies are unfamiliar with the availability of veteran education & training benefits or how to ask their veteran employees about their benefits. Education and training benefits may be utilized to cover in whole or in part the costs for technical training, licensing certification, and professional development. Our training with propane companies will expose all these benefits and provide a pathway for professional development and employee improvement.

V.E.T.S. will work collaboratively with Region 2 organizations to train on best practices to increase the number of qualified veterans working with propane. V.E.T.S. training will focus on how to attract and interact with the military community, while supporting propane marketer's approach to hiring, recruiting, and retention programs towards military candidates.

V.E.T.S. will work with local state associations develop outreach material specific to the region aimed at veteran groups, to educate the military community about the benefits of fulfilling careers in the propane industry. V.E.T.S. outreach will help establish connectivity with the military and veteran community by forging relationships with local military units, as well as non-profits supporting veterans. Engagement will include open table job fairs, Reserve and military unit speaking events, industry awareness campaigns, and social media outreach.

Deliverables will include webinars to propane membership, speaking engagements with veteran groups, access to the propane recruitment portal, live seminars at industry events, employer training guides, brochures aimed at military units extolling the benefits of careers in our industry, newsletters, and ongoing support. Additionally, V.E.T.S. will educate and support propane marketers and associated businesses on the many trait benefits of hiring veterans which includes communication skills, flexibility, teamwork, planning, problem solving, and work ethic. In addition to the ability & work ethic benefits above, this engagement will help propane marketers identify, hire and retain U.S. military service members at a far lower cost than typical civilian applicants. This workforce development resource is vital to the survival and growth of the propane industry.

The V.E.T.S. recruiting program is an existing, functioning entity and has demonstrated sustained performance in 2019 with over 56 military hires in the regional pilot program. V.E.T.S. will utilize its National Network to provide connectivity with a skilled, trainable and loyal workforce that the propane industry needs. The audience this program serves will be the propane industry, regardless of the members/ non-member status.

The transition phase of this project is the most crucial piece to its success. We understand the financial requirement to run this program as an annual service is not financially sustainable for the industry. Therefore this program includes a 3-month transition phase that will encompass handing the program in its entirety to the associations' active in each region. This project will begin in Region 2 as soon as approved and will include the deliverables listed on slide 11 of the expansion PPT, which will be scheduled over the course of 15 months. We anticipate a three-month delay between activation of each region to guarantee a successful phase 1 operation with a potential time for complete national adoption within 39 months of program start.

Strategic Importance

- ☐ Describe how this initiative supports PERC's strategic plan.
- ☐ Describe how this initiative is important to the propane industry.

Workforce development has been and continues to be one of the largest challenges we face as an industry. The communication channels V.E.T.S. has developed provides the connection to the National Guard and Reserve military community. This connection will offer propane marketers the ability to forge relationships with the military communities in their area and brand their organizations and the industry as a whole as "Veteran Friendly".

V.E.T.S will contact local military units and begin education on the benefits of fulfilling careers in the propane industry. Next, we will provide a direct connection with the military units to propane companies and associated businesses with open positions. This is critical to propane marketers in need of quality employees.

Veterans have access to many valuable benefits, although many are unfamiliar or lack the training of how to access them. This fact is amplified when it comes to employers. Roughly 90% of employers are not aware, or do not take advantage of the benefits that they are eligible to receive. Like other government programs, access to such benefits is intricate and daunting to manage without proper stewardship. V.E.T.S. military experts will provide propane marketers the training and guidance to properly hire veterans and take advantage of available benefits and savings. Additionally, employers may be eligible to receive financial incentives for their current veteran employees. V.E.T.S. not only assists marketers in filling open positions, but these hires often result into significant dollar savings on training, health care, and tax incentives. The discipline provided by veterans as well as the fact that veterans can obtain a CDL-B via the DOT waiver makes veterans highly valuable employees. Veterans also may have additional skills gained through service that will translate to the propane industry.

Veterans seeking new career opportunities are valuable assets to the propane industry.

Budget Impact

Category: Workforce Outreach	Year Total: \$800,000
YTD Remaining: \$800,000	Remaining if Funded: \$0

Three Year Funding History for Similar Dockets

Year	Docket	Budget \$	Actual \$	Results

Success Measures

- ☐ Describe the desired outcome of the project / measurement of success.

The desired outcome is to provide the propane industry with the education and training to hire, train, and retain skilled military employees. Success will be measured by the result's received by both the propane industry and veteran community.

We will measure our success within the propane industry by the number of marketers assisted with veteran recruitment, number of marketers participating in educational deliverables, number of candidates engaging for propane opportunities, and the number of military candidates that successfully enter the propane industry.

Key veteran community metrics will include number of contacts made, number of interviews, and the number of hires. For the funding period, we project the number of veteran contacts made will range between 8,000 and 15,000 service members. We anticipate the number of candidate interviews to range between 200 and 300. We anticipate a 30% hire rate, in the initial launch year of the region.

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Safety and Market Development – Gate 3: Project Details

Project Title: PERC Region 2 Military Education & Recruitment Program	Docket #: 22500
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Product Details (Completed by applicant)

1. Market / Audience Rationale

- ☐ Who is the target audience?
- ☐ Why is the target audience important?
- ☐ What is the geographical reach (national, regional)?
- ☐ What input have you received on the project concept from the market/audience?
- ☐ What market research has been done in support of this project?
- ☐ What is the urgency of the project?

The audience is two-fold. First off, you have the propane marketers and vendors. The past growth and strength of the propane industry is due largely in part to the people that serve it. From drivers and technicians, to sales and customer service representatives, this industry relies on its employees to provide that personal touch that is lacking in other industries. Unfortunately, for many years, a major challenge has been to develop a talent pool to continue to fuel growth, while providing replacement for its aging workforce. This problem is not just limited to the skilled tradesmen sector of our industry. It is occurring in all positions within any given propane marketer company. In order for this industry to survive, we need to refocus our attention on inviting new energy, via a new talent pool, to this industry.

Secondly, we have the veterans. The veterans possess all the attributes propane marketers and vendors would be looking for in a job candidate. While the unemployment rate among veterans is trending in the right direction, there are still way too many veterans coming back from overseas without a job. Additionally, the folks that served in previous wars continue to struggle to search for work. It is our duty to help find appropriate positions and work towards a 0% unemployment rate for veterans. With Vets2Techs, our mission was to solve both these problems with a singular solution-recruit in this talent pool.

In the market that Vets2Techs has been launched, New England and New York, Vets2Techs has been received with open arms. To date we have helped generated 1,732 candidates for these markets and have helped our companies hire 67 of veterans. Our goal would be to duplicate the success for Region 2.

2. Development

- ☐ What content will be created?
- ☐ Who will create the content?
- ☐ How will the content be created?
- ☐ What existing content will be leveraged?
- ☐ What is the level of difficulty to create the content?
- ☐ What are the possible challenges in creating the content?

Nobody can speak to the needs and wants of a veteran, better than a fellow veteran. Our expertise includes over 30-years of experience in finding veterans employment in various industries, but more importantly within propane in our pilot program in the Northeast. Our experience, network, and know-how would allow us to effectively communicate to a variety of veteran groups throughout Region 2. We will engage with the military community in the form of unit visits and military career events. Additionally, we will provide our knowledge and know-how to the propane marketers on how to effectively reach out, recruit and hire veterans. This would include getting into the intricacies of what type of benefits might be available to the propane marketer, based on the qualifications the veteran will require. Lastly, we can provide training to propane marketers on various benefits they may be entitled to, based on their current veteran employees. Our team of experienced professionals can help any human resource department cut through the “red tape” of these burdensome programs.

3. Delivery

- ☐ How will the content be delivered to the market?
- ☐ What existing delivery channels will be used?
- ☐ What training is necessary, and who needs training to deliver this program?
- ☐ What are the possible challenges in delivering the program?
- ☐ What is needed to generate enthusiasm for the program within the propane industry and with partners?

We would deliver this message through several channels. We would conduct webinars for educational sessions on how to hire a veterans and access veteran programs. We would utilize live presentations at trade shows, conferences, and association meetings. We would utilize our existing network and association contacts to reach out to the members directly via email blast & social media. Lastly, marketers can utilize our website vets2.org to post jobs, check on upcoming events and find pertinent employment resources.

As it pertains to the veterans, the delivery of our message would be done in person at unit visits, career fairs and yellow ribbon events. We would utilize our military connections to set up these engagements. We have found folks in the industry are more than excited to learn about how they can hire veterans, fill much needed positions AND save money through veterans hiring programs.

4. Customer Service and Support Needs

- ☐ What are the customer service and support requirements?
- ☐ What service and support resources are required?
- ☐ Are service and support developed through this project?

When it comes to hiring veterans, Veterans Educations and Transitions Services (V.E.T.S.) would support any propane marketer within Region 2 under this program. We would serve as a resource to their respective human resource departments, should questions arise in recruitment and hiring of a veteran. Additionally, we are a resource in supporting your current veteran employees. Lastly, we would provide reference materials for members to utilize for future needs.

5. Leverage and Synergies

- ☐ What are the internal strengths leveraged to develop and deliver this program?
- ☐ How much dependence is on partners to develop and/or deliver the content?
- ☐ How could the content be used by other markets or industry organizations?
- ☐ How could the content be used with other audiences beyond the target audience?
- ☐ What results have been achieved with previous, similar projects?

The propane industry has long supported veterans, many companies were founded by veterans returning home after WWII, and this project could easily lead to a win-win for the veterans and the recruitment challenges facing our industry.

The key to a successful deployment of this program, is the access to veteran education program specialists provided by the partnership of V.E.T.S. and marketers throughout the region. These individuals have compiled the knowledge and experience in creating and deploying these programs to benefit individual companies and associations.

The programs developed address the need of the industry, re-images the industry as veteran friendly, educates the veteran community on available career opportunities, and assist both parties in utilizing federal and state programs to reduce the total investment when training a new military candidate.

The costs to replace an employee varies by their earning level, so training costs will also vary. The average costs to replace an \$8.00 per hour employee is \$5,444.47 per turnover. Through use of various programs V.E.T.S. can assist in lowering this traditional cost associated with onboarding a new candidate.

This process requires consistent communication and information sharing with our partners to develop and deploy a veteran outreach and recruitment plan. Utilizing a National Oil heat Research Association (NORA) association as an example, the V.E.T.S. team was able to develop and deploy an approved program in less than 3 months. During this process the V.E.T.S. team conducted multiple meetings with the membership's board of directors to agree on the deployment plan and timeline. Through the utilization of this process the

V.E.T.S. team has assisted over 200 veterans in finding gainful employment in the year of 2018, we have also had the opportunity to conduct more than 12 veteran speaking engagements.

6. Cost/Benefit Analysis

- ☐ What is the expected impact on market?
- ☐ What are measurable success targets, e.g., units sold?
- ☐ What is the estimated quantifiable impact on gallons sold, if applicable?
- ☐ What is the relative cost per gallon and other measurable targets?

The desired impact is to provide the propane industry with the education and training to hire, train, and retain skilled military employees. Success will be measured by the result's received by both the propane industry and veteran community.

We will measure our success within the propane industry by the number of marketers assisted with veteran recruitment, number of marketers participating in educational deliverables, number of candidates engaging for propane opportunities, and the number of military candidates that successfully enter the propane industry.

Key veteran community metrics will include number of contacts made, number of interviews, and the number of hires. For the funding period, we project the number of veteran contacts made will range between 8,000 and 15,000 service members. We anticipate the number of candidate interviews to range between 200 and 300. We anticipate a 30% hire rate, in the initial launch year of the region.

Without a talent pool of new hires, the propane industry will be forced to shrink as its workforce ages into retirement without replacements.

7. Risk Assessment

- ☐ Identify 3-5 potential risks to the successful completion of the project or inability to meet outcome targets, how likely those are to happen, impact on the project, and how to resolve those risks.
- ☐ Indicate low, medium, or high for "Likelihood" and "Impact."

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Resolution and/or Contingency Plan(s)
Lack of engagement by industry	Low	Low	Active promotion by the associations and V.E.T.S. to increase knowledge of program
Changes in military benefits	Medium	Low	Revise communications to reflect changes and redirect benefits to another topic to attract employers to participate.
Available State PERC funding	Medium	High	Lower deliverables to accommodate remaining states or identify alternative financial solution.

8. Budget

- ☐ Outline cost per task, including estimated cost share (cash and in-kind).
- ☐ If applicable, indicate hourly rates, including overhead
- ☐ Highlight contractor vs. pass-through costs.

Program Budget Breakout

Region 2											
Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia											
PAD Staffing Requirements	Monthly Expenses	Quarterly Expenses	Yearly Expenses				Total Annual Cost - PAD 2			\$	
										293,040.00	
Area Recruiter	\$ 6,200.00	\$ 18,600.00	\$ 74,400.00				2020 Annual Cost - PAD 2			\$	
										293,040.00	
Assistant	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 18,000.00					Quarterly	\$		
										73,260.00	
								Monthly	\$		
										24,420.00	
Oversight Staffing Requirements											
Operations Manager	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 5,400.00	\$ 21,600.00								
Executive Director	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 24,000.00								
Business Expenses											
Fixed	\$ 300.00	\$ 900.00	\$ 3,600.00								
Variable	\$ 5,850.00	\$ 17,550.00	\$ 70,200.00								
Operational	\$ 13,271.20	\$ 18,475.20	\$ 24,720.00								
Engagement Expenses											
Travel	\$ 4,200.00	\$ 12,600.00	\$ 50,400.00								
Communications	\$ 510.00	\$ 1,224.00	\$ 6,120.00								

Sustainment Budget

Region 2												
Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia												
PAD Staffing Requirements			Monthly Expenses	Quarterly Expenses	Yearly Expenses			Total Annual Cost - PAD 2				\$ 84,720.00
Area Recruiter			\$ 6,200.00	\$ 18,600.00	\$ 74,400.00			2020 Annual Cost - PAD 2				\$ 84,720.00
Assistant								Quarterly				\$ 21,180.00
								Monthly				\$ 7,060.00
Oversight Staffing Requirements												
Operations Manager												
Executive Director												
Business Expenses												
Fixed												
Variable												
Operational												
Engagement Expenses												
Travel					\$ 4,200.00							
Communications			\$ 510.00	\$ 1,224.00	\$ 6,120.00							

9. Timeline

- ☐ Provide a detailed timeline of all activities, tasks, and milestones.
- ☐ Include commencement and completion dates.
- ☐ List most responsible person for each task.

V.E.T.S. has altered the timeline of the program to be 15 months per region:

3 Month - Standup

9 Month - Operations

3 Month – Transition

The **Standup Phase** of the V.E.T.S. program will focus on the construction of the infrastructure required to run program operations throughout the region being activated. The mission critical items accomplished during this phase are listed below:

- Identify and onboard military recruiter for region
- Identify and compile all military contacts throughout region

- Establish working relationships with all state and federal veteran service liaisons
- Establish working relationship with key industry leaderships throughout region

Identify and construct lines of communication between V.E.T.S., Industry leadership, and the military leadership throughout the region

The **Operations phase** will provide education to propane companies on the many federal and state funded programs available to both veterans and their employers. Such benefits include but are not limited to; military health insurance, housing stipends, tax breaks, continuing education, career training, etc. As it relates to the propane industry, the education and training benefits may be utilized to cover, in whole or in part, the costs for technical training, licensing certification, and professional development expenses that typically are funded solely by employees/employers. V.E.T.S. will further educate and support propane marketers and associated businesses on the benefits of hiring veterans, as veterans bring advanced abilities and work ethic in communication, flexibility, teamwork, planning, problem solving, and technical skills to the work environment.

V.E.T.S. training will focus on how to interact with the military community and help acclimate propane marketer's approach to hiring, recruiting, and retention programs towards military candidates. In addition to the ability & work ethic benefits above, this engagement will help propane marketers identify, hire and retain U.S. military service members at a far lower cost than typical civilian applicants.

V.E.T.S. outreach will help establish connectivity with the military and veteran community by forging relationships with local military units, as well as non-profits supporting veterans. Engagement will include open table job fairs, unit speaking events, industry awareness campaigns, and social media outreach. PGANE will work with V.E.T.S. to develop materials specific to the New England area, including average pay information and job benefits, as well as highlighting specific job benefits such as working alone in the great outdoors and helping local families by responding to emergency calls.

The deliverables will include webinars to propane membership, speaking engagements with veteran groups, access to the propane recruitment portal, live seminars at industry events, employer training guides, brochures aimed at military units extolling the benefits of careers in our industry, newsletters, and other ongoing support. V.E.T.S. will also offer individual marketer audits, that will help marketers identify and access funding and benefits for the current veterans they currently employ.

The V.E.T.S. recruiting program is an existing, functioning entity and has demonstrated sustained performance in 2019 with over 75 military hires for the year. V.E.T.S. will utilize its National Network to provide connectivity with a skilled, trainable and loyal workforce that the propane industry needs. The audience this program serves will be the propane industry, regardless of the members/ non-member status with state associations.

The **Transition Phase** of this project is the most crucial piece to its success. We understand the financial requirement to run this program as an annual service is not financially sustainable for the industry. Therefore we are offering to include a 3-month transition phase that will encompass handing the program in its entirety to the associations' active in each region.

The V.E.T.S. team will work with industry leadership to identify key personnel to manage the maintenance of the program and its operations to guarantee its successful continuation. We understand that a group of associations on their own will be unable to manage the full-time aspects of the program relating to military liaising, so each regional recruiter will be available to be onboarded as a full-time employee or contractor by the region's associations. This will assist in making the transition process as seamless as possible while continuing to employ the veteran recruiter that has established key relationships with military leadership throughout the region.

The purpose of the transition period will be to relinquish the program's operations, marketing material, and established lines of communication over to the propane associations in the active region, this will include the option to onboard our veteran recruiter that managed the region throughout the 15-month program.

Handing over processes to different teams requires careful planning, coordination, and communication between all affected groups and individuals, including partners and affiliates outside the organization. This takes time, leadership commitment and resources.

1. Solidify leadership support.
2. Understand current state. Carefully inventory the processes requiring transition, including the attributes and organization of the specific project team(s) and individuals performing these processes.
3. Define future state. Note specific requirements for the transitioning processes, including the functional owners of specific processes as well as staffing and budgetary constraints for each functional area.
4. Confirm and monitor operational metrics. Define project success based on achieving operational metrics within specific timeframes and based on having each functional area with processes requiring transition reviewing and agreeing upon these metrics.
5. Enlist expertise and appoint a transition leader.
6. Engage affected personnel. Engage affected personnel in lead roles throughout the transition process – from designing the future organizational model and associated roles and staffing levels to defining the comprehensive transition plan and approach and individual team charters.
7. Determine staffing. Based on the future state organizational model and associated operational metrics, the leadership for each functional area should define their team's roles and responsibilities and the staffing levels required to support the new organizational model and associated operational metrics.
8. Develop team charters. Each functional area should develop (or update) individual charters to ensure clarity of each team's mission, scope of responsibilities, organization structure, roles and responsibilities, staffing, etc.
9. Create and execute transition plans. Determine specific team and individual transition plans to migrate process ownership from the project team to the operational team.
10. Establish post-transition processes for documentation and evaluation.

The transition of this program will allow each region to install and deploy the 15-month program for an average cost of \$293,040 (please see breakout on slide 20 expansion PPT) and expect an annual sustainment cost less than 90,000 (please see breakout on slide 21 expansion PPT). The goal of the V.E.T.S. team at the conclusion of the 15-month program would be to embed the veteran recruiter into an association role to guarantee the programs continued success while minimizing the industry's financial requirements.

Measurement and Evaluation (Completed by PERC staff and applicant)

10. Project metrics

- ☐ Detail how success will be measured for this project overall and by tactic, what the metric is, and when it will be achieved.

Project Deliverable Metrics, by Region	Metrics	By When
1-hour webinar	6	
1-hour live seminar	4	
Veteran Speaking engagement	Minimum of 25	
Ongoing support	15 Months	
Brochure designed promoting program to service members	6	
Quarterly progress report	3	
Monthly Newsletter	12	
Regional Focus Recruitment Video	3	

Military Career Fair	5	
Market Outcomes	Metrics	By When
n/a		
11. Partner Selection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What was the basis for selecting the recommended contractor? <input type="checkbox"/> If the basis for selection is not via a competition, describe the unique qualifications this vendor possesses. <input type="checkbox"/> For time and material work arrangements, list or attach the Principal Hourly Rates and the basis used to determine that the rates are competitive. <input type="checkbox"/> How will matching funds be verified? 		
<p>Region 2 propane marketers and V.E.T.S. organization will partner together in order to collectively accomplish our mission to better educate and support the success of the propane industry and bring veterans into the propane industry. V.E.T.S. and state associations will continue to run this program for propane industries within our states and we are confident that our close working relationship will result in achieved success.</p> <p>Currently the V.E.T.S. team has partnerships with multiple associations and private companies hiring both nationally and internationally, both within and outside of the retail energy sector. Region 2 marketers will decide to partner with V.E.T.S. because of the success of V.E.T.S., because they are a non-profit, and do not charge recruitment fees as do others in this sector. V.E.T.S representatives have presented at both association meetings and the national events, volunteering their time and efforts, and there has been a great deal of interest in partnering with V.E.T.S. from companies in the industry.</p> <p>Contributions are determined in relation to the type and quantity of deliverables within each individual program. Region 2 association leadership will be asked to agree to provide additional monetary (1/3 program total) and non-monetary funding in support of this program. Approximately thirty three percent of the contributions will be provided by region 2 state association, the matching funds contribution from region 2 associations will come from their respective state foundations. This portion of the funding is contingent on each foundation board's approval and the approval of this grant request.</p>		