



JANET T. MILLS  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC  
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



HEATHER JOHNSON  
COMMISSIONER

January 9, 2024

TO: Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

FROM: Heather Johnson, DECD Commissioner  
David A. Richmond, Director, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services

RE: Pilot Project for Transitioning Military Members

This report is submitted pursuant to 2021 Public Laws, Chapter 483, Part II, which requires the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, in consultation with the Director of the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services within the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, to submit a written report of the results of the pilot project.

**Initiative:** Provides one-time funds in fiscal year 2021-22 for the first year of a pilot project for outreach and support services for active-duty military members who are transitioning to civilian life in the State and their families.

**Funding:** Federal Expenditures Fund – ARP State Fiscal Recovery: \$200,000.00

**Background:**

On January 18, 2022, the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan (MJRP) review team granted approval to DECD, in consultation with the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services, to design a specialized recruitment effort aimed at transitioning military members who have experience in Maine's industries negatively impacted by the pandemic. On February 18, 2022, an RFP was released seeking nonprofit and for-profit entities to participate in a pilot project to attract transitioning active-duty military members and their families to civilian life in Maine.

Only one response was received to the RFP. A contract was awarded to Boots2Roots on May 2, 2022, for a 12-month pilot program. Recognizing that Maine could benefit from actively recruiting transitioning military members into all available positions, beyond those impacted by the pandemic, DECD provided an additional \$30,000 to expand the program's target audience so that it could encompass workforce gaps beyond the scope imposed by the Federal guidelines.

**Contract:**

The Contract required Boots2Roots to provide a workforce attraction, marketing, and outreach program to assist the transition of up to 200 military members, veterans and/or spouses to Maine's workforce. Providing individualized services including but not limited to; resume writing; interview coaching; financial coaching; introduction to employers, Veterans' service organizations and community organizations; and facilitate introductions to peer mentors.

Every year, approximately 200,000 men and women leave U.S. Military service and return to life as civilians. The outcomes desired from the pilot program were identified as follows:

- Demonstrate effective engagement strategies to reach 100% of transitioning military members and provide information about Maine's workforce opportunities.
- Increase commitment from transitioning service members to live and work in Maine by 50% over the previous years.
- Provide transition services and successfully transition 80% of enrolled service members to living and working in Maine.

### **Boot2Roots:**

Boots2Roots immediately began a proactive workforce attraction marketing campaign:

- Half and full-page advertisements appeared in the following magazines:  
G.I. Jobs Magazine  
Stars and Stripes Transition Guide  
Military Spouse Magazine
- Billboard Placement in San Antonio, TX targeting the medical military community
- Participated in more than 18 in-person and virtual Military Job Fairs hiring events including:  
Fort Hood, Texas  
San Antonio, Texas  
Fort Drum, NY  
Cherry Point, NC  
Hiring Our Heroes  
Victory Virtual Hiring Events
- Designed a campaign to digitally target military members who expressed a willingness to relocate after military service
- Launched Facebook and LinkedIn campaigns to connect transitioning military members and their families with workforce opportunities within the State
- Successfully campaigned to get Maine featured in G.I. Jobs as a Military Friendly State

Additionally, Boots2Roots increased its resume coaching, interview coaching and transition coaching.

### **Boots2Roots Results:**

- 93% improvement in year over year enrollment from 76 to 147 (110% projected growth in 2023)
- 22% improvement in year over year employment for servicemembers, Veterans and spouses; from 41 to 50 (2023 full-year projects 35%)

- Federally identified “in need” industries that hired Boots2Roots candidates since May 2022:
  - Healthcare/Social Services = 9
  - Construction/Trades/Logistics = 17
  - Manufacturing = 11
  - Education = 3
  - Information/IT/Cyber = 1
  - Clean Energy = 3
  - Other = 6 (State Government (4), small business (2))

**Note:** Because Boots2Roots starts working with active-duty military members 12-18 months before transition, there is a corresponding lag between the increase in enrollment numbers and an increase in hiring numbers. As a positive consequence, this investment will continue to produce results 12-24 months after funding is completed. For the full 2023 calendar year Boots2Roots enrolled 190 military members, Veterans, and military spouses in the Transition to Work Program. Active enrollment increased from an average of 32 candidates in 2022 (before ARP funding), to 90 candidates in 2023, a 181% increase.

**Other Results:**

- 94% of candidates who complete the Boots2Roots program find work within 60 days of arriving in Maine
- 92% remain in their first post military job at least one year
- Average annual salary is \$68,000
- 80% of enrollees are married with children
- 84% of enrollees purchase a home within 12 months of arriving in Maine
- 65% of enrollees are not originally from Maine and neither is their spouse
- \$232 million minimum projected economic impact to Maine

**Conclusion:**

Boots2Roots produced significant results for Maine’s workforce. In the twelve-month contract, Boots2Roots has aggressively marketed Maine employment opportunities to military communities around the country.

Of the \$200,000 budget, Boots2Roots expended a total of \$199,953.12