



# GUIDELINES FOR THE TENNESSEE VETERAN READY BUSINESS RECOGNITION PROGRAM

## INTRODUCTION

The Tennessee Department of Veteran Services (TDVS) proudly introduces the Tennessee Veteran Ready Business Recognition Program. This program aims to recognize businesses in Tennessee that go above and beyond to **Recruit, Hire, and Retain** service members, Veterans, and their families (SMVF). It also allows businesses to honor our military community's invaluable service and sacrifices.

At TDVS, we help you go from "**Veteran Friendly**" to "**Veteran Ready.**" Our structured approach educates and assists businesses in promoting a pro-Veteran workplace culture, strengthening Tennessee's workforce by leveraging the unique skills and experiences of the SMVF community.

The Tennessee Veteran Ready Business Recognition Program (VRBP) offers three tiers of recognition – Bronze, Silver, and Gold. Each level indicates an escalating commitment and support to SMVF in Tennessee. To qualify, businesses must demonstrate progressively deeper engagement, from basic recognition of military service in hiring practices to empowerment through career development, and ultimately, to making broad-reaching impacts both within and outside their organizations.

By participating in this program, businesses will join TDVS in its mission to support and empower the SMVF community in Tennessee. Together, we can create a more inclusive and supportive workforce that recognizes our military community's unique values and contributions.

## DID YOU KNOW IN TENNESSEE?

- Tennessee law permits private businesses to adopt a hiring policy that gives preference to Veterans. This policy follows the [Tenn. Code Ann. § 50-1-107](#).
- The [Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development](#) has Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) who can assist the business in establishing its status as a preferred employer. This status unlocks benefits such as '24-hour Veteran priority' for job postings, personalized recruitment support, and enhanced visibility on Jobs4TN.gov.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE FEDERAL TAX CREDITS AVAILABLE FOR HIRING VETERANS?

*(Please note that these tax credits are federal programs and not specific to the State of Tennessee.)*

- For more information, click the following link about the [Work Opportunity Tax Credit](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor or the [Work Opportunity Tax Credit](#) from the Internal Revenue Service.
- For more information, click the following link: [Returning Heroes and Wounded Warrior tax credits](#).



## BENEFITS:

UPON ACHIEVEMENT AS A TDVS RECOGNIZED VETERAN-READY EMPLOYER, BUSINESSES UNLOCK SEVERAL ADVANTAGES:

- **Enhanced Digital Visibility:** Listing your business as a Veteran Ready Business on the TDVS.gov website provides a link to the business's website. The link-back can help enhance your online visibility.
- **Enhanced Recruitment of Quality Employees:** Broaden your pool of skilled SMVF talent. This enriches your workforce with mission-focused individuals with valuable life skills and educational backgrounds.
- **Demonstrate Community Commitment:** Showcase your business's dedication to the community by actively supporting SMVF. This will boost public perception and trust and inspire others to participate in similar commitments.
- **Gain Diverse Leaders:** Employ leaders with diverse experiences who can relate to a wide range of clients, customers, and employees, enriching your business's ability to connect across diverse groups.
- **Community Network:** Participate in a program that enhances the SMVF Ecosystem by promoting connections and sharing resources among Veteran Service Organizations and the public and private sectors.
- **Public Recognition of Your Commitment:** Receive public recognition for your commitment to Veterans with a window decal, certificate, and digital badge. Additionally, your business will be featured in the TDVS directory of certified Veteran Ready Businesses.

## APPLICATION AND AWARD TIMELINE

- The annual application window runs from **July 01 to October 01**.
- Businesses submit their applications through the designated online portal. ***The online portal will only accept complete applications.***
- The **award determinations** will be completed in **October**.
- The **award notifications** will be sent out in **November**.
- The **award will be effective January** of the following calendar year.



## ELIGIBILITY:

Please note that meeting the eligibility criteria is not enough to guarantee recognition. The TDVS reserves the right to deny or revoke recognition at its discretion.

### GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL LEVELS:

To qualify for any level of certification, businesses must:

- Have location(s) within the State of Tennessee.
- Must currently be and remain in good standing with the [State of Tennessee](#).
  - The TDVS reserves the right to remove any business that does not remain in good standing.
- Submit an [online application](#) by the annual October 01 deadline.
- Provide a 100-250 word narrative detailing the business's culture and its dedicated support for SMVF. All or part of this statement may be used in a public-facing listing of your business.

### IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER WHEN FILLING OUT THE APPLICATION:

- **Service members, Veterans, and their families will be referred to by the acronym SMVF throughout the application.**
- **All application questions must be answered in full, even if an answer is provided in the business profile.**
- **Be clear and concise on any explanation given within the application.**
- **Ensure that any documentation clearly explains how it addresses the question and applies to SMVF.**

### BRONZE-LEVEL RECOGNITION: (VALID FOR ONE **1** YEAR)

***Honor our SMVF by being intentional in our hiring efforts.***

**OBJECTIVE:** Recognize businesses that recruit and honor the service and sacrifices of SMVF.

**REQUIREMENTS:** To qualify for the **Bronze-Level Recognition**, the business must provide:

- Documentation of the current number of SMVF employees;
- A signed [Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve \(ESGR\) Statement of Support](#), if applicable;
- Confirmation that the business accepts military experience in place of secondary education or civilian certifications;
- There is evidence of efforts made to inform SMVF employees about SMVF-specific earned benefits or external programs available, such as through the website or bulletin boards. The application provides a downloadable information sheet that can be used to educate your SMVF employees and recommends conducting an internet search to find additional local options. Businesses are encouraged to post this document and upload a photo or a copy of what they are currently using;
- Documentation, such as screenshots, should be provided to showcase the utilization of social media, websites, and job banks. Potential SMVF employees can explore and apply for available job positions on these platforms. Examples of these platforms include the business's official website, social media channels, Jobs4TN.gov, mass emails, and various social media platforms and websites of Veteran organizations.



**RECOGNITION:**

- **Certificate:** The business will receive a certificate from the State of Tennessee acknowledging it as Veteran Ready and a preferred employer SMVF.
- **Window Decal:** The business will receive a window decal to be displayed on its premises, indicating your business' level of achievement and commitment.
- **Digital Badge:** The business will receive a digital badge to display on their website, social media, and/ or emails, indicating their level of achievement and commitment.
- **Website Listing:** Listed on the TDVS.gov website as a recognized Bronze-Level Veteran Ready Employer.

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**SILVER-LEVEL RECOGNITION: (VALID FOR 2 YEARS)**

***Empower SMVF by providing a work environment that allows them to thrive.***

**OBJECTIVE:** Recognize businesses that empower SMVF with career development opportunities.

**REQUIREMENTS:** To qualify for the **Silver-Level Recognition**, the business must demonstrate:

- Fulfillment of all Bronze-level requirements;
- Evidence of current SMVF employees' participation in the hiring of potential SMVF employees (e.g., job fairs, resume screening, or interview process);
- Attendance and participation in at least one hiring event that targets and allows the SMVF community to apply for open positions (e.g., local American Job Center or other employment agencies);
- Establishment of a Veteran Retention Program showcased through mentorship, employee resource groups, career pathing, and upskilling initiatives;
- Maintenance of a platform (e.g., website, employee break area) that educates and informs SMVF employees about Veterans benefits and other programs specifically targeting SMVF (e.g., support groups, special parking spots, time off for benefit-related appointments);
- Collaboration with a Veteran-serving organization (local, state, or nonprofit) to ensure employees have a resource to assist with applications and educate them about earned VA benefits.

**RECOGNITION:**

- **Regional Recognition:** The business will be recognized regionally by a Commissioner designee.
- **Certificate and Award Plaque:** The business will receive an award plaque and certificate from the State of Tennessee, acknowledging the business as Veteran Ready and a preferred employer supporting SMVF.
- **Window Decal:** The business will receive a window decal to display on their premises, indicating their level of achievement and commitment.
- **Digital Badge:** The business will receive a digital badge to display on its website, social media, and/ or emails, indicating its level of achievement and commitment.
- **Website Listing:** The TDVS.gov website will list the business as a recognized Silver-Level Veteran Ready Employer.



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**GOLD-LEVEL CERTIFICATION: (VALID FOR 3 YEARS)**

***Impact our SMVF by investing in their families***

**OBJECTIVE:** Recognize businesses that impact the lives of SMVF both inside and outside the workplace.

**REQUIREMENTS:** To qualify for the **Gold-Level Award**, a business must demonstrate:

- Fulfillment of all Bronze and Silver-level requirements;
- Employment of (or volunteer) SMVF-focused personnel whose position includes Veteran outreach or the hiring/retention of Veteran employees;
- Establishment and maintenance of a hiring and retention program for military spouses (e.g., a non-competitive hiring process, flexible work hours, job relocation assistance, on-site daycare);
- Utilization of an online military skills translator to integrate service members and Veterans into the workforce (an example is in the application);
- Creation and implementation of on-the-job training or apprenticeship programs for Veteran community employees (e.g., Skill Bridge Program, Cyber Warrior Program, Journeyman Programs, Internships, Fellowships, or the Apprenticeship Ambassador Initiative).

**RECOGNITION:**

- **State Recognition:** The business will be recognized by the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, or Commissioner's designee.
- **Media Exposure:** Gold-level businesses will be recognized with a media press release for achieving the highest level of recognition.
- **Certificate and Award Plaque:** The business will receive the highest level of recognition, including a top-level award and certificate (both physical and digital), acknowledging their readiness and commitment to supporting SMVF.
- **Window Decal:** The business will receive a window decal to display on their premises, indicating their level of achievement and commitment.
- **Digital Badge:** The business will receive a digital badge to display on their website, social media, and/ or emails, indicating their level of achievement and commitment.
- **Website Listing:** The TDVS.gov website will list the business as a recognized Gold-Level Veteran Ready Employer.

**Contact Information**

- **Stephen Bell**, Director of State Operations: (615) 906-6033.
- **Sherry Pickering**, Veteran Outreach Coordinator: (615) 927-0960.
- **Mary Deel**, Veteran Outreach Coordinator: (629) 213-8053.
- **Email:** [TDVS.DOSO@tn.gov](mailto:TDVS.DOSO@tn.gov).
- **Website:** [www.tn.gov/Veteran/VRE](http://www.tn.gov/Veteran/VRE).

**DISCLAIMER:**

The Tennessee Veteran Ready Business Recognition Program is a voluntary program designed to recognize and support businesses committed to recruiting, hiring, and retaining service members, Veterans, and their families. Recognition does not constitute an endorsement by the Tennessee Department of Veteran Services nor guarantees any specific benefits or outcomes. Businesses are solely responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.