



# Operation Warfighter (OWF) FAQs For RSMs and Commands

## About the Program

What is Operation Warfighter (OWF)?

- Operation Warfighter (OWF) is a DoD internship program for Recovering Service Members (RSMs). It provides non-paid internships with federal agencies during the rehabilitation process, allowing RSMs to practice skills in a civilian workplace. Since 2008, over 6,000 RSMs have participated in internships at more than 200 partners nationwide.

### Regional Coordinator Information:

Name

Region

Email

Phone

## Eligibility & Participation

### • Who is eligible to participate?

Service members (all branches, all components) who are:

- Assigned to a Service Warrior Care Program, and/or
- Enrolled in the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES).

### • When should I apply for an OWF internship?

- OWF internships are only available while a RSM is actively in the IDES or assigned to a Service Warrior Care Program.
- Ideally, applicants should have 4–5 months remaining before transition to allow enough time for placement and meaningful participation.
- Once IDES findings are received, it is usually too late to apply unless the Service member appeals the findings.

### • How long can I participate in OWF?

RSMs may intern if they are on active duty and meet program eligibility. The IDES process typically lasts approximately 180 days; Commanders are encouraged to expedite application signatures to ensure time for maximum internship placement. Internships must end when the RSM transitions or is found fit for duty.

### • Can a RSM still participate if they have appealed their ratings?

Yes. If the RSM appeals their disability rating, they may be able to extend their internship throughout the appeal process until they transition out of the military.

### • Can I intern after I separate or retire?

No. Internships must be completed prior to the end of active-duty service.





- **Can I intern with more than one agency?**

This is not recommended. To maximize the benefit of OWF, RSMs should focus on one internship that best aligns with their career and transition goals.

- **Can I intern with private organizations (ex: Amazon or Northrop Grumman)?**

No, OWF only partners exclusively with federal agencies.

- **How is OWF different from Skill Bridge?**

While both programs provide opportunities for Service members to gain civilian experience, there are key differences:

- OWF is specifically for wounded, ill, or injured RSMs who may not yet have a separation date. These unpaid internships occur during rehabilitation and must be completed while the RSM is still on active duty.
- Skill Bridge is for Service members who are within 180 days of separation, have a confirmed separation date, and are preparing to transition to civilian life. Skill Bridge participants can intern with private-sector companies and federal agencies.

## Internship Details

- **What is the time commitment?**

- Minimum: 20 hours per week for at least 3 months
- Some interns may serve full-time until separation or return to duty.

- **What about schedule flexibility?**

Agencies must allow interns to attend medical appointments and meet unit requirements. Supervisors may request appointment slips to confirm absences.

- **Will agencies guarantee employment after internships?**

No. There is no guarantee of employment. However, agencies may hire interns if opportunities are available. Many RSMs earn a VA disability rating of 30% or higher, which may qualify them for direct-hire authority.

- **Will I be paid for my internship?**

No. OWF internships are non-paid. RSMs remain on active duty and receive their normal military pay and benefits.

- **Who pays for transportation?**

Transportation is the RSM's responsibility. Neither OWF nor the host agency provides reimbursement for commuting costs.

- **Do I need a resume?**

Yes. RSMs need a resume to participate in the OWF program.





## Support & Oversight

- **What if I don't like my internship?**

Communicate immediately with your Regional Coordinator (RC). If the internship is not a good fit, RCs will help adjust or disengage appropriately.

- **What if issues arise during an internship?**

Both agencies and Service members should contact the RC. The priority is ensuring internships align with professional goals and remain meaningful.

- **What policy governs Education and Employment Initiative (E2I) and OWF?**

Both programs are governed by DoDI 1300.25.

- **Can my commander say no?**

Yes. A RSM's chain of command (UCMJ authority) can deny participation.

- **Is an internship guaranteed once I apply?**

No. While OWF makes every effort to match applicants, internships depend on agency availability.

- **Will medical appointments prevent participation?**

No. Agencies understand that medical care remains the priority during rehabilitation.

- **Can I do my OWF internship in a different location?**

No. All internships must be local to where the RSM is assigned. There are no temporary duty (TDY) or relocation orders. Some agencies may offer remote internship opportunities, depending on the availability.

- **Who is accountable for RSMs during the internship?**

The command remains accountable for the RSM. RSMs still belong to their unit while interning, and commands may require check-ins for accountability purposes.

- **What documentation is provided to the chain of command?**

Once the RSM is accepted and onboarding is complete with the federal agency, the OWF Placement Form will be provided to the chain of command. This document includes the contact information for the federal agency point of contact (POC) and the weekly schedule. It must be signed by the RSM, the federal agency POC, and OWF RC.

