



## The Big Picture: Comprehensive Measurement of Inclusion of Veterans

*Historically, the results of veteran and other inclusion programs have been measured in a piecemeal manner with metrics offering information about factors like recruitment totals and spend per FTE. Metrics that give a more comprehensive picture are needed for long-term success.*

Producing indicators of specific aspects of a program or initiative does not give a comprehensive assessment of status. Diversity programs to date have concentrated on factors like diverse supplier spend and talent benchmarks for women or minorities. Though these metrics are useful, they are also piecemeal because each one standing alone does not provide a complete picture of status.

For veterans, this can equate to employers being satisfied they hired a certain number of veterans without regard for their long-term acceptance or success, or being content with knowing a certain amount of budget funds have been spent on recruitment and retention of veterans.

Questions remain in both instances. How does the organization know the current initiatives are successful or whether increasing the inclusion of veterans is the right strategy? Is the organization fulfilling its economic and social responsibilities according to its policies and public statements?

### Putting the Pieces Together

Assessing specific inclusion factors offers information about pieces of a total program or initiative. Most metrics paint a part of a picture at a point in time, such as yearly spend, hiring totals and promotions.

They tend to provide snapshots of different aspects of the program but not program success in relationship to organizational policies and goals that are focused on maintaining competitive advantage in a global marketplace. Stating an “x” number of veterans were hired or left the company does not inform as to whether the veterans are getting the training and tools needed to succeed, the success of the recruitment personnel in matching experience and capabilities, or how the organization benchmarks against similar industry organizations.

Metrics should serve as indicators of the total program and its effectiveness over time. Measuring benefits of any diversity and inclusion program is particularly difficult.



Yet, the benefits should be measurable in order to demonstrate things like improved relationships between veteran employees and the workforce or enhanced understanding of the particular needs of veterans entering the civilian workforce which leads to improved hiring and retention of exceptionally qualified talent.

Other benefits include increased organizational productivity, increased access to talent with leadership qualifications, the addition of new perspectives that leads to innovation, and brand and reputation improvement.

### Making Connections

Diversity and inclusion metrics have focused mostly on representation of a particular group in the workforce and the Human Resources cost of achieving that representation. Now there is a move toward including quantitative and qualitative measurements that are connected to business goals.

Traditional quantitative metrics are still important. The organization should be able to demonstrate it is successfully recruiting, hiring, retaining, developing and promoting veterans. But they are supplemented with metrics that include factors like improved strategic progress as a result of the hiring of veterans and improved leadership capabilities as a result of hiring and managing veterans.

What is the ROI of hiring veterans? What unique contributions do veterans make to the organization? Are workforce perceptions and acceptance of veterans improving? Do employee surveys indicate a lack of understanding of the unique needs of veterans adapting to civilian life or a lack of full acceptance? Does the organization have a culture that is truly inclusive of veterans (and other diverse groups)?

There are excellent tools available today like Human Synergistics' Organizational Culture Inventory® that can contribute to a better understanding of the fit of a D&I program in the organization. Besides analyzing the current cultural state of the organization, it can be used to create individual and organizational action plans for bringing about cultural change.

The Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) developed a measurement model that measures the specific aspects of the fulfillment of ESC rights. The framework is designed to assess the relationship of government policies and allocations of resources to a fuller picture of effort and outcomes.

OPERA (Outcomes, Policy Efforts, Resources, and Assessment) offers an invaluable guide for the corporate world also because it offers a strategy for holistically assessing programs or initiatives. Applying the model, veterans' programs would be measured to identify relevant development outcomes such as disparities in veteran D&I; commitment to the veterans programs through quantitative and qualitative information on the "availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality (the "AAAQ" criteria" of relevant interventions)"; whether adequate



resources are made available; and the findings from the first three steps to determine if the economic and social rights of the relevant group are being met.

Holistic program or initiative assessment delivers the big picture.

## Improvements Over Time

Measuring veterans programs on quantitative and qualitative factors over time is important to ensuring the best organizational effort is being put forth.

Benchmarking against industry standards expands the picture to include internal and external status. The data and analytics are only useful though if they are used to improve inclusion of veterans in a way that leads to greater veteran and organizational success. The veterans initiative should include a plan for management accountability, regular management performance reviews, process for making amendments to veteran training and development programs to improve metrics, and so on.

One of the greatest challenges is determining which metrics provide the best information for a particular organization. The next challenge is ensuring the right data is collected. Many organizations still struggle with the concept of qualitative metrics because they seem to fall in the category of what was once called "touchy-feely," a term meant to minimize their importance.

Hiring and retaining veterans is an important D&I effort that recognizes the people, who make it possible for U.S. businesses to compete and succeed through defense of the country's freedoms, are the people who deserve the best that corporate America has to offer.

To ensure veterans initiatives are accomplishing desired goals, it is important to measure more than headcounts and spend. And by the way, this is a principle that applies to all diverse groups of employees.

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