



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:** 19-6406

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**Agenda Item Number:** 33.

**Agenda Date:** 9/12/2019

**In Control:** City Council A Session

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**DEPARTMENT:** Government & Public Affairs, Office of Military and Veteran Affairs

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Jeff Coyle, Juan G. Ayala

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** City Wide

**SUBJECT:** Hiring Our Heroes Memorandum of Understanding

### **SUMMARY:**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes a two-year, formal agreement between the United States Chamber of Commerce's Hiring Our Heroes Corporate Fellowship Program and the City of San Antonio. The MOU will specifically direct how the \$150,000 currently budgeted towards military spouse employment will be spent.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Active duty military spouses are recognized to have higher rates than non military spouses in both under employment and unemployment. This is as a direct consequence to being married to a service member which results in frequent moves that are reflected on resumes through short terms of employment before relocating and gaps in employment while job searching at their new locations. The greatest challenge identified with military spouse employment is overcoming the stigma that the military spouse will suddenly move and their time at the organization is not equivalent to the time that will be required to train and incorporate the spouse into the company. This is a false narrative for numerous reasons including the typically higher level of education held by military spouses than non-military spouses and the skill sets, adaptability, and resiliency common to military spouses.

The challenge associated with military spouse employment is nationally recognized as one of the top four reasons active duty personnel leave the service and pursue civilian careers. Therefore, military spouse employment has a direct result on unit readiness and a units ability to complete their mission. Both mission readiness and community support are two factors used in "base reduction, alignment, and closure" (BRAC) considerations. The city of San Antonio is taking an proactive approach to avoid BRAC at the Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) installations.

As a result, and as part of San Antonio's ongoing efforts to support the military, the City Council budgeted \$150,000 in the FY 19 budget to support employment opportunities for spouses of active duty military members. The Office of Military and Veteran Affairs (OMVA) was tasked with exploring community needs in this area and making a recommendation as to how most effectively implement the funding.

To capture best practices from the community, OMVA consulted with a number of Veteran Support Organizations (VSO), including the USO, Good Samaritan Veterans Outreach and Transition Center, Wounded Warrior Project and the Bexar County Military and Veterans Services Center. OMVA also consulted with members of City Council and the Military Transformation Task Force Tri-Chair. In addition, OMVA also consulted with the City's Human Resources Department and the City Attorney's Office.

After this extensive review, OMVA concluded that partnering with the United States Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring our Heroes (HOH) Military Spouse Fellowship Program (MSFP) will result in the most effective use of City funds and provide the needed support to military spouses.

This HOH program is an initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation dedicated to measurably impacting military spouse employment and underemployment. HOH's goal is to advance the narrative across America regarding the value of military spouses in the workplace and to connect military spouses with continuous and meaningful employment opportunities.

OMVA selected this program for a number of reasons to include HOH's successes in other U.S. states and their national marketing campaign. The campaign seeks to dispel any negative connotations associated with hiring military spouses and educate employers regarding most military spouses' strong work ethic, high education levels, and extensive experience working with diverse groups of people.

OMVA is seeking approval on a memorandum of understanding which outlines the requirements of both the U.S. Chamber of Commerce HOH and the City of San Antonio (CoSA) for the use of the \$150,000 towards a military spouse employment initiative. The MOU explains the funds will be used to provide \$15 per hour payment to spouses participating in the HOH MSFP through a third party company. The majority of the MOU outlines how the MSFP will operate, metrics to measure the success of the program which HOH must provide, and how HOH and CoSA will communicate with each other and outside agencies concerning the program.

To summarize the MSFP itself, the active duty spouse applies through the Chamber of Commerce's website to participate in the program as a 'fellow'. Potential companies are solicited to serve as 'hosts'. Through three cohorts per a year, fellows' resumes are sent to potential host who then interview potential fellows. If selected, from Monday- Thursday for six weeks, a fellow is employed at a host company. Every Friday fellows attend seminars to assist in employment skill building and networking. After six weeks, if a fellow is offered employment, the fellowship may be extended to cover the onboarding time for a maximum of four additional weeks. The program will fund approximately 40 military spouses. The number participating in each cohort will vary based upon available positions within each host company aligning with the current potential fellows. The City of San Antonio is a potential host company in the program.

The MOU was approved and signed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The MOU was reviewed and is supported by the City of San Antonio's OMVA, Human Resources, and City Attorney's Office. On August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019, the Intergovernmental Relations Committee approved this MOU for full council consideration.

#### **ISSUE:**

This item continues City Council policy to support JBSA's military missions and position the City to keep and expand military missions. The three Service Secretaries have addressed family support as a significant factor for future basing decisions [i.e. Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)]. There is a direct correlation between military spouse employment and the readiness and retention of active duty members. The lack of employment opportunities for a spouse affects a family's decision to stay or leave the military, and spouse career opportunities are one of the top factors for determining military retention.

This MOU outlines the relationship and requirements between the City of San Antonio and HOH and supports City Council policy.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

An alternative to accepting this MOU is to revise the terms of document or seek another partner to support military spouse employment; either action would delay the start of the project.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes a two-year, formal agreement between the United States Chamber of Commerce's Hiring Our Heroes Corporate Fellowship Program and the City of San Antonio for an amount not to exceed \$150,000. Funding for this MOU is included in the Government and Public Affairs Department FY 2019 Adopted Budget and subsequent funding is contingent upon future budget appropriation.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the MOU with the United States Chamber of Commerce Foundation for a Hiring Our Heroes Corporate Fellowship Program.