

From Barracks to Boardroom

The Capacity Was Built. Civilian Systems Often Cannot Read It.

The federal government spends more than \$13 billion a year on military-to-civilian transition programs, and RAND found virtually no evidence that the programs it examined have had a direct effect on transition outcomes. That finding covers Veteran Readiness and Employment along with everything else. This paper does not use it to argue that other programs fail. It uses it to argue the only thing a new provider should: that in a field with no outcome evidence, the scarce commodity is not another program — it is evidence. Written for VR&E counselors, regional office staff, and anyone deciding whether a formation program is worth a Chapter 31 authorization.

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The Central Proposition

Military service can build judgment under pressure, tolerance for unrewarded effort, and the capacity to function while activated. Little of that is legible on a civilian résumé, and the transition system devotes comparatively limited attention to making it so. Where the capacity was built, it survives separation. The translation frequently does not.

Executive Brief

- The system cannot demonstrate the direct effects of most of what it funds, and this is the government's own finding. RAND catalogued 45 federal military-to-civilian transition programs across 11 agencies, representing more than \$13 billion annually, and reported that there is virtually no evidence that any of the programs examined has had a direct effect on transition outcomes. In some cases the evidence was counterintuitive: the Transition Assistance Program was

associated with lower wages for participants.

- It covers VR&E too, which is one of the four largest programs in the analysis, and this paper says so rather than implying otherwise. This paper treats that as a shared measurement problem rather than a criticism of the program, and proposes that a provider's primary contribution is evidence.
- Comparatively little of the money directly targets skill translation and employer connection. RAND found that the vast majority of expenditure supports education, and that very few programs and a small share of funding are dedicated to helping service members translate military skills to the civilian labor market, find apprenticeships or jobs, or connect with employers.
- A veteran working far below their capability still registers as employed, and may still count as a successful placement in headline program measures. Analysis of resume data from more than six million job seekers, of whom 547,941 were veterans, found that nearly one-third of veteran job seekers were underemployed relative to their objective skill level, a rate reported as 15.6 percent higher than non-veteran job seekers. This is an illustrative reported-data signal from a 2017 commercial platform analysis, not an established current magnitude.
- And transition does not end at separation week. A ten-year longitudinal interview study found that military identity continues to shape self and working life a decade after separation, including among veterans fully embedded in

civilian workplaces. That finding supports testing a sustained model. It does not establish the necessary duration or the effectiveness of any particular one.

- Mission-Ready Civilian™ has no outcome evidence, and this paper claims none. Section VIII states what the program commits to producing, on what schedule, and who will analyze it.

A Note on Method

This paper follows the EQGenix evidentiary standard. Every citation was verified against its primary source before publication. Limitations are disclosed inline, at the point of claim. Correlational and qualitative findings are never described in causal language. The strongest available evidence against the thesis is engaged by name.

Claims are labeled by evidence class throughout:

ESTABLISHED EVIDENCE for peer-reviewed or systematically reviewed findings; REPORTED DATA for institutional or commercial data collection that has not undergone peer review; REGULATORY FACT for statute and published agency material; and EQGENIX ARGUMENT for the firm's own reasoning, which is argument rather than evidence.

Operational specifications — contact hours, cohort structure, completion criteria, pricing, and the authorization workflow — are carried in the MRC™ VR&E Provider Packet and not in this paper. Where the two differ, the Provider Packet governs.

What This Program Claims, and What It Will Not

This section precedes the argument because everything downstream depends on it.

EQGENIX ARGUMENT

Mission-Ready Civilian™ claims and delivers capacity, not healing. It is employment-readiness formation delivered by instructors to participants who are not patients. It is not therapy, not a clinical intervention, and not a substitute for VA mental health care.

- EQGenix Institute LLC does not provide clinical services, does not diagnose, and does not treat.
- No claim is made anywhere in this paper that the program treats post-traumatic stress, reduces suicide risk, resolves moral injury, or produces any clinical outcome. Those claims would require evidence this paper does not have.
- Where a participant needs clinical care, the program is not the answer. The instructor's obligation is to refer and to document, under the tiered protocol in Section XI: immediate action and minimum necessary disclosure where there is imminent danger, and the participant's consent before any counselor notification where there is not. No referral is ever made contingent on continued enrollment, and no participant loses standing in the program for declining one.
- Clinical literature appears in this paper only where it bears on employment capacity, and never as a foundation for a

treatment claim.

Claim equals delivery. If the program cannot deliver it, the program does not claim it — in this paper, in the Provider Packet, or in a conversation with a counselor.

No Two Veterans Arrive With the Same Profile

EQGENIX ARGUMENT

This paper describes capacities that military service can build. It does not claim that service builds them uniformly, and a program that assumed so would fail the first cohort it enrolled.

Branch, rank, occupational specialty, length of service, leadership exposure, deployment and combat history, unit climate, injury and disability, and separation circumstances all materially shape what a given veteran brings to transition. A twenty-year senior noncommissioned officer and a twenty-two-year-old separating after one enlistment with a disqualifying injury do not arrive with the same profile, and neither is well served by a program built around a template of the other.

The operating rule follows directly: Mission-Ready Civilian™ assesses capacity rather than presuming it. The purpose of entry measurement is to find what a participant actually holds, not to confirm that they hold what the curriculum expects. Formation should surface assets, not assign a heroic profile that participants are then expected to occupy. Any MRC material that reads as though every veteran arrives with the same strengths is out of standard and should be corrected.

What Chapter 31 Actually Permits

REGULATORY FACT

The regulatory position should be stated precisely, because a provider that overstates it puts a counselor in a difficult place.

Under 38 CFR § 21.292, only courses approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs may be used to provide training and rehabilitation services under Chapter 31. Under § 21.294, facilities providing such services must meet the criteria in §§ 21.290 through 21.299 — including adequate space, equipment, instructional material, and instructor personnel — and VA has final responsibility for selecting the facility, though the case manager considers the veteran's preference. Section 21.294 also states that VA policy is to use VA facilities where available, and that non-VA facilities may be used to provide rehabilitation services only when necessary services are not readily available at a Veterans Health Administration facility. Section 21.290 provides that use of outside facilities and services is procured through contract, agreement, or other cooperative arrangement, with contracting requirements described at 48 CFR 871.2, and § 21.294 provides for formal contracts for reimbursement as required by § 21.262.

EQGENIX ARGUMENT

What that means for this document, stated plainly: Mission-Ready Civilian™ is designed for consideration within an individualized Chapter 31 rehabilitation plan, subject to counselor determination, applicable VA authority, course approval, facility criteria, the VA-facility-first policy, and current procurement requirements. It is not represented as pre-

authorized, and no counselor should read "structured for authorization under Chapter 31" anywhere in EQGenix material as meaning that a purchase is already permitted.

The contracting entity, payee, tax identification, provider credentials, insurance, data controller, and research partner are identified in the MRC™ VR&E Provider Packet. On entity relationship: EQGenix Institute LLC is the program-delivery and contracting entity; the curriculum and marks are owned by EQGenix Inc. and licensed to the Institute for delivery.

Procurement reviewers should treat the Provider Packet as the controlling document on all of the above.

I. Thirteen Billion a Year, and Virtually No Evidence of Effect

ESTABLISHED EVIDENCE

In 2024, RAND published an analysis of the federal military-to-civilian transition landscape. Working from a Government Accountability Office catalogue of 45 programs overseen by 11 federal agencies, the researchers examined benefits, target populations, costs, and how effectiveness is evaluated. The federal government spends more than \$13 billion each year on these programs. In fiscal year 2019, four programs — the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Veteran Readiness and Employment, the Department of Defense Tuition Assistance Program, and Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance — accounted for approximately \$13.5 billion of a \$14.3 billion total, while the Transition Assistance Program, which serves every separating service member, was funded at roughly \$140

million.

The central finding is a measurement finding. RAND reported that there is virtually no evidence that any of the programs examined has had a direct effect on transition outcomes, and that in some cases the evidence ran the other way: the Transition Assistance Program was associated with lower wages for participants. A companion RAND brief states that among programs designed to help veterans transition to civilian employment there is virtually no evidence of their effects on career outcomes, and that most programs examined lack the data, evaluation plans, resources, and outcome measures needed to assess effectiveness.

Limitation disclosed at point of claim: this is an analysis of program documentation, budget data, and existing evaluations, not a trial of any program. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence – many of these programs may work and simply have never been measured, which is precisely what RAND says. The finding is about the state of the evidence infrastructure, not a verdict on any individual program or the people who run it. RAND also reported difficulty compiling dependable budget information, so the expenditure figures should be read as best available rather than audited.

EQGENIX ARGUMENT

Two things follow, and the order matters.

First, Veteran Readiness and Employment sits inside this finding rather than outside it. VR&E is one of the four largest programs RAND examined. It would be dishonest to cite this report at a counselor as though it described everyone except the program the counselor administers. It does not, and this paper does not pretend otherwise.

Second — and this is the only use of the RAND finding that

EQGenix considers legitimate — a field with no outcome evidence is a field where confident claims are cheap. The finding applies to Mission-Ready Civilian™ exactly as it applies to everyone else. The correct inference is that the landscape lacks outcome evidence and therefore a new provider should be built to produce some. The incorrect inference is that everything else fails and therefore a counselor should choose this program. The second inference is not made here and will not be made in any EQGenix material.

A provider that arrives in a field with no outcome data and offers more confident claims has added to the problem. The scarce commodity is not another program. It is evidence.

II. A Veteran Employed Far Below Capability Still Registers as Employed

REPORTED DATA

Veteran unemployment figures have for years compared favorably with the general population, and that comparison obscures part of the problem. Unemployment remains real and serious for particular subgroups — recently separated younger enlisted veterans, veterans with significant disability, and veterans in weaker regional labor markets among them. What the aggregate figure does not capture is a second condition sitting alongside it. A joint analysis by ZipRecruiter and the Call of Duty Endowment examined resume data from more than six million job seekers, of whom 547,941 were veterans, and

found that nearly one-third of veteran job seekers were underemployed — defined as employment below their objective skill level — at a rate reported as 15.6 percent higher than non-veteran job seekers. The authors noted that standard federal employment statistics, which rest largely on whether a person did any work for pay in the prior week, do not capture this condition at all.

Limitation disclosed at point of claim: this is a commercial platform study, not peer-reviewed, and the sample is job seekers active on one employment platform rather than a population-representative sample of veterans. The underemployment definition is the authors' own. The report dates from 2017 and the labor market has changed since. It is cited here as an illustrative reported-data signal that federal statistics do not capture this phenomenon at all, not as an established current magnitude. A counselor should treat the direction as informative and the number as dated. Contemporary, peer-reviewed estimates of veteran underemployment, skill mismatch, occupational downgrading, and earnings trajectories — disaggregated by rank, specialty, gender, race, and disability status — would materially strengthen this section and are a stated gap in the evidence base.

ESTABLISHED EVIDENCE

The RAND analysis reaches the same territory from the funding side. It reports that overall, very few programs and a small amount of funding are dedicated to helping service members and veterans translate their military skills to the civilian labor market, find civilian apprenticeships or jobs, or connect with civilian employers, and that the vast majority of federal funding goes to transition programs that primarily support education.

EQGENIX ARGUMENT

Put those together and the shape of the problem changes. A veteran who is employed, and employed far below their

capability, registers as employed. In headline program measures they are likely to appear as a successful placement rather than as a problem, and nothing in ordinary reporting distinguishes the two. Meanwhile the system's dominant response — fund more education — addresses credential supply, which is not obviously the binding constraint for a person whose difficulty is that their existing capability cannot be seen, stated, or exercised in a civilian setting.

For a counselor this has a practical implication. A Chapter 31 plan that ends in placement has met its terms. Whether the placement uses what the veteran actually brought is a separate question, and it is the question this paper is about.

III. Transition Is Still Live a Decade After Separation

ESTABLISHED EVIDENCE

The transition literature converges, from several directions, on identity as a variable that cannot be treated as a side issue. Grimell's ten-year longitudinal interview study, following participants from 2013 to 2023, found that military identity continues to shape the self and working life a decade after separation — including among participants fully embedded in civilian workplaces. Keeling's narrative study of U.S. veterans found that appraising transition only through measurable factors such as employment, living conditions, and health overlooks psychological and sub-clinical difficulty, and that identity requires explicit programmatic attention. A meta-synthesis by Sachdev and Dixit examines military-to-civilian

cultural transition among retired military personnel, and Flack and Kite's study of 358 former Australian Defence Force personnel examined military identity, social connectedness, and subjective wellbeing.

Limitation disclosed at point of claim, and it is substantial. This literature is predominantly qualitative, cross-sectional, and drawn from modest samples, with two of the four studies conducted outside the United States. It establishes that identity is central to how veterans describe transition, and that it persists. It does not establish that identity is the single load-bearing construct in transition, that intervening on identity improves employment outcomes, or that any particular programme length is required. No study cited here tested any of those. Three sources carried in an earlier version of the MRC evidence base – Harris 2011, Currier 2018 and 2019, and an unverifiable 2024 reference – were withdrawn on review as clinical intervention studies inappropriate to a capacity-building program or as unverifiable.

EQGENIX ARGUMENT

Grimell's ten-year finding is the most consequential citation in this paper, and it is consequential for a scheduling reason rather than a theoretical one. If identity-related transition remains live a decade after separation, then a single event delivered in the final months of service may be insufficient for some veterans. That supports testing a sustained model with a follow-through layer, which is the design of the program described in Section V. It does not establish the necessary duration, that formation changes identity, that longer programming is superior, or that MRC's particular follow-through design works. Those are the open questions in Section IX, and stating them as open is the difference between a design rationale and a claim.

IV. The Résumé Is Not the Whole Problem

The standard account of skill translation is a documentation problem: the veteran holds capability, the résumé fails to describe it, and the fix is better language. That account is not wrong, and it is not sufficient.

Consider what a mid-career noncommissioned officer actually holds. Judgment exercised under conditions where the cost of error was measured in lives. Tolerance for effort across deployments in which feedback arrived late or never. The capacity to receive direct correction without collapse, and to deliver it without cruelty. The ability to remain functional while physiologically activated. Relational repair inside a unit that could not afford a broken working relationship.

Every one of those is a capacity, not a credential. Military records may document rank, specialty, training, awards, and service history, but they do not translate those experiences into civilian evidence of judgment, regulation, relational repair, or sustained effort. And none of them survives the translation to a civilian interview automatically. Many veterans have never had to articulate these capacities in civilian language or demonstrate them outside the structure that made them legible — inside the institution, they were simply the water.

The résumé problem is real and résumé help is necessary. It is not sufficient. Where the deeper difficulty lies is in naming, evidencing, and deliberately exercising a capability outside the structure that produced it.

That reframing has a consequence for program design. If the whole deficit were documentation, a résumé workshop would close it. Where a capacity is real but unnamed, unevidenced, and untested outside the institution that built it, documentation help alone will not, and what is proposed in addition is formation: naming the capacity, building the vocabulary for it, exercising it in civilian contexts, and generating evidence of it that a civilian employer can read.

V. The Formation Proposition

EQGENIX ARGUMENT

Mission-Ready Civilian™ is a cohort-delivered formation program for veterans in employment transition, operated by EQGenix Institute LLC and structured for authorization under Chapter 31. Its proposition is narrow and should be read as narrow: that capacity built in service is real and frequently untranslated, that translating it is a formation task rather than only a documentation task, and that translation is a two-sided problem of which this program addresses one side. Capacity built in service can persist, weaken through disuse, become context-dependent, or be obscured by injury, stress, or mismatch — which is why the program assesses what a participant holds rather than assuming it survived intact.

Four properties distinguish it from what typically occupies a transition plan.

- It is capacity-directed rather than credential-directed. The unit of work is a capability the veteran already holds and cannot yet name, evidence, or deploy.

- It is sustained rather than event-based, with a follow-through layer after the instructional phase. That is a design response to the persistence finding in Section III, not a demonstrated requirement; the necessary dose is unknown and is a research question rather than a specification.
- It is training rather than treatment, delivered by instructors to participants who are not patients, inside the scope constraints in Section XI.
- It is instrumented. Every participant generates entry, exit, and post-program measurement, which is the contribution described in Section VIII.

The construct spine is the Emotional Portfolio™ — Cognitive Sovereignty™, Emotional Regulation™, Resilience Architecture™, Relational Intelligence™, and Effort Tolerance™ — applied here in transition context. That the same spine is used across first responder, workforce, and youth programs is deliberate, and it is a testable commitment rather than a branding decision: it requires measurement invariance across those populations, which has not been established and is stated as a falsification condition in Section IX.

VI. Construct Lineage and Differentiation

A counselor evaluating a provider is entitled to ask why these five capacities rather than established constructs that already have instruments. The lineage below states the nearest relatives, the proposed distinction, and what result would show the EQGenix construct is redundant.

Four adjacent families are relevant. Psychological hardiness, introduced by Kobasa as commitment, control, and challenge, was developed to explain why some people under high stress remain well. Psychological flexibility, synthesized by Kashdan and Rottenberg, describes recognizing situational demands and shifting repertoires when a strategy is not serving.

Psychological capital — hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism — carries meta-analytic support across 51 samples and 12,567 employees. Grit, defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals, showed incremental predictive validity over IQ and conscientiousness while correlating highly with conscientiousness.

EQGENIX ARGUMENT

Cognitive Sovereignty™ sits nearest psychological flexibility and metacognition; its proposed distinction is the provenance of a judgment — whether the veteran can separate a conclusion they reasoned to from one absorbed from the institution.

Redundancy test: no unique variance over psychological flexibility in predicting decision quality under pressure.

Emotional Regulation™ sits nearest emotion regulation and distress tolerance; the distinction is the observable interval between activation and considered response rather than self-reported strategy. Redundancy test: no unique variance against ability-based emotion regulation measures.

Resilience Architecture™ overlaps most heavily with hardiness, and the paper concedes it. The distinction is whether identity reorganizes around an adverse event rather than whether

distress resolves — a distinction with particular force in a population whose identity is the subject of Section III.

Redundancy test: failure to separate from hardness in factor analysis.

Relational Intelligence™ sits nearest social competence and ability-based emotional intelligence; the distinction is initiation of repair as the measured behavior, in workplace and household settings simultaneously. Redundancy test: collapse into the social-effectiveness dimension of personality.

Effort Tolerance™ sits nearest grit and conscientiousness; the distinction is tolerance for a long feedback interval specifically. Redundancy test: failure to separate from grit or to add over conscientiousness.

Disclosure at point of claim: every distinction above is a proposal, not a finding. No discriminant-validity study has been run for any of the five in any population. The redundancy tests are stated so that a researcher can run them against EQGenix rather than for it.

VII. Observable Indicators in Transition Context

EQGenix publishes behavioral indicators and retains scoring models and item banks as proprietary. The indicators below are stated in transition terms so a counselor can test the construct against veterans they already work with.

Cognitive Sovereignty™. The veteran can state a career decision and its reasoning as two separate things, can articulate the strongest argument against their own plan, and can distinguish a conclusion they reached from one inherited from a unit, a

recruiter, or a peer group.

Emotional Regulation™. The interval between activation and considered response is observable and does not collapse under interview pressure, performance feedback, or a rejection.

Arousal and behavioral output are visibly decoupled.

Resilience Architecture™. After a rejection, a failed placement, or a rating decision, the veteran's account of who they are does not reorganize around the event. Recovery interval shortens across repeated setbacks rather than lengthening.

Relational Intelligence™. The veteran initiates repair with a supervisor, a colleague, or a spouse without requiring the other party to move first, and distinguishes being misunderstood from being wrong.

Effort Tolerance™. The veteran sustains a job search across a stretch in which no feedback arrives — the ordinary condition of civilian hiring — and can distinguish a search strategy that is failing from one that is merely slow.

Limitation disclosed at point of claim: these are face-valid behavioral descriptions, not validated scale items. They have not been subjected to factor analysis and no claim of psychometric validity attaches to them in this form. They are not eligibility criteria, not employability determinations, and must never be used as either — see Section XI.

VIII. What This Authorization Will Produce That Others Do Not

This is the section a counselor should read first, and it is the reason the paper exists.

WHAT AN AUTHORIZATION CURRENTLY PRODUCES, AND WHAT IT COULD			
The upper row describes the evidence typically available to a counselor. The lower row is the measurement commitment described in Section VIII. Neither row is a claim about outcomes.			
AT AUTHORIZATION	DURING DELIVERY	AT COMPLETION	6 AND 12 MONTHS AFTER
TYPICAL EVIDENCE AVAILABLE TO A COUNSELOR Program description, cost, and hours.	Attendance and participation notes.	Completion certificate. Satisfaction rating.	Nothing is collected. The record ends.
MISSION-READY CIVILIAN™ MEASUREMENT COMMITMENT Baseline capacity profile and a stated hypothesis. <i>A commitment to measure is not a claim to work. MRC has no outcome evidence. Section VIII states what it will produce and by when.</i>	Dose, fidelity, and attrition recorded.	Exit profile, change score, and employment status.	Retention, wage, and skill-use follow-up.
EQGenix Institute LLC · White Paper 005 · Figure 1 · Research Edition v1.3			

Figure 1. What an authorization currently produces, and what it could. The lower row is a commitment to measure, not a claim about outcomes.

EQGENIX ARGUMENT

Section I established that the federal transition landscape cannot demonstrate its own effects. That is not a problem a single provider solves. It is a problem a single provider can decline to worsen, and can make a small contribution to fixing. Mission-Ready Civilian™ commits to the following, and the commitments are stated here so they can be enforced against the program.

- Baseline and exit measurement on every participant, using an identical instrument at both administrations. In the first cohorts these produce developmental profiles, not validated change determinations. No participant is told they have improved or declined, because the instrument does not yet have the reliability data, standard error of measurement, reliable-change threshold, or interpretation ranges that such a statement requires. Cohort-level movement is exploratory and is reported as exploratory.

- Post-program follow-up at six and twelve months, covering employment status, retention, wage, and self-reported use of military-acquired skill in the current role. This is the measurement the field does not fund, and it is budgeted first rather than last.
- Outcome measurement that distinguishes participant failure from employer-recognition failure. This matters commercially and scientifically: if a veteran can name and evidence a capacity and a hiring manager still cannot read it, the placement does not happen, and a trial that does not separate those two cases will record a formation failure that was nothing of the kind.
- Dose, fidelity, and attrition recorded for every cohort, so that a null result can distinguish theory failure from delivery failure or insufficient exposure.
- A pre-registered analysis plan filed publicly before the first cohort is administered, so the hypotheses cannot move after the data arrives.
- A staged design. Wave one is explicitly a feasibility and measurement-development study, not an effectiveness trial: enrollment, completion, attrition and reasons, acceptability, assessment burden, follow-up retention, measure reliability, floor and ceiling effects, felt coercion, and referral frequency. Wave two introduces a pre-registered comparison
 - MRC plus services as usual against services as usual alone, with services-as-usual defined in advance and never degraded to create a contrast — allocated and analyzed with clustering by cohort or site. Validation of employment

retention, wage progression, skill utilization, job quality, and durability at six and twelve months follows, not precedes, those two waves.

- Analysis specifications fixed in advance: first-wave sample size and number of cohorts, allocation method, missing-data handling with complete-case analysis alone not accepted, clustering by cohort, and covariates including prior rank, occupational specialty, disability status, time since separation, and local labor-market conditions. Participants are compensated for follow-up assessments, and the data-retention period and independent data custodian are named in the registration.
- Outcome analysis conducted by an external academic or research partner rather than by the parties who built and deliver the curriculum, with EQGenix's commercial interest disclosed in every publication.
- Publication of null and disconfirming results on the same footing as supportive ones.

On measurement roles and the choice of instrument

ESTABLISHED EVIDENCE

Before naming any instrument, the measurement roles have to be kept apart, because collapsing them is the most likely way this design goes wrong. Capacity measurement, reintegration outcome, employment outcome, behavioral evidence, and feasibility are five different jobs requiring five different instruments. One candidate deserves naming, because the decision is live and a counselor should know how it will be

made. The Military-Civilian Adjustment and Reintegration Measure, developed by Romaniuk and colleagues, is a 21-item self-report measure with a five-factor structure — Purpose and Connection, Help seeking, Beliefs about civilians, Resentment and regret, and Regimentation — confirmed by factor analysis in a separate sample, with excellent internal consistency for the total score and strong test-retest reliability.

Limitation disclosed at point of claim, and it is decisive for this decision. The M-CARM was developed and validated in a convenience sample of transitioned Australian Defence Force veterans. Measurement invariance between Australian and United States veteran populations has not been established, and a measure that performs well in one national military culture cannot be assumed to carry to another without testing. Adopting it as a primary outcome instrument in a U.S. program therefore imports an unresolved invariance question, and that question should be answered rather than ignored. The instrument decision is open at the time of publication and will be recorded in the pre-registration.

EQGENIX ARGUMENT

There is a second and more basic reason the M-CARM cannot serve as the primary measure of this program's construct. Its five factors — Purpose and Connection, Help seeking, Beliefs about civilians, Resentment and regret, and Regimentation — are adjustment and reintegration dimensions. They are not the five capacities in the Emotional Portfolio™, and treating a reintegration measure as a capacity measure would produce a change score that means something other than what it is reported to mean. The correct roles are these: capacity measurement requires new or adapted instruments developed for that purpose; the M-CARM is a candidate convergent and secondary reintegration outcome, subject to U.S. validation work; employment outcomes are retention, wage, job quality,

and skill use; behavioral evidence comes from scenario or performance-based assessment; and feasibility is completion, burden, acceptability, and attrition. The pre-registration will state which instrument occupies which role.

EQGENIX ARGUMENT

A commitment to measure is not a claim to work, and this distinction should be held firmly. Everything in this section describes what the program will produce. None of it is evidence that the program produces a benefit. A counselor authorizing this program in the first cohorts is authorizing research-informed training, and should describe it to the veteran in those words.

IX. What Would Have to Be True

EQGENIX ARGUMENT

Five conditions would refute this framework. None is discharged.

Structural validity. Factor analysis on adequately powered veteran samples must recover five distinguishable factors. If they collapse, the architecture is wrong and should be revised rather than defended.

Discriminant validity. The Emotional Portfolio™ must measure something not already captured by general mental ability, the Five Factor Model, psychological capital, and ability-based emotional intelligence. The redundancy tests are in Section VI.

Predictive validity. Scores must predict outcomes VR&E already

cares about — placement, retention at six and twelve months, wage, and skill utilization — beyond what existing instruments predict, in prospective designs.

Sensitivity to intervention. Formation must move the score and the movement must persist past the program window. If capacity is fixed, the operating premise fails whatever the curriculum's instructional merit.

Measurement invariance. The claim that one spine reads across veterans, first responders, and civilians requires configural, metric, and scalar invariance testing across those populations, and — as Section VIII notes — across national military cultures for any imported instrument.

Disclosure at point of claim: a further design risk is unaddressed. If capacity is captured by self-report in a single administration, observed relationships may be inflated by shared method variance rather than shared substance. Multi-source measurement is required and has not been implemented.

X. The Strongest Counterarguments

One: the evidence gap cuts against you, not for you

The objection: this paper spends its first section establishing that federal transition programs cannot demonstrate effects, then proposes another program with no demonstrated effects. Conceded without qualification. Nothing in the RAND finding supports Mission-Ready Civilian™. What the paper claims is that the pre-placement capacity layer is under-instrumented and worth instrumenting, and that a provider should arrive with a measurement plan rather than a claim. Any counselor told

otherwise is being sold something.

Two: VR&E already does this

The objection: Chapter 31 already provides vocational counseling, evaluation, and long-term services, delivered by trained counselors who know the veteran. A commercial formation program is duplicative.

Partly correct, and the overlap is real. The distinction offered is layer rather than function. VR&E counseling is individualized, plan-directed, and administratively bounded; the proposition here is cohort-delivered formation on a defined construct set with instrumented entry, exit, and post-program measurement. Whether that layer adds anything over counseling alone is exactly the question Section IX puts on trial, and it has not been answered.

Three: the veterans who need this least will be the ones who complete it

The objection: cohort formation programs select for the participants already best positioned to benefit, and any apparent effect is selection rather than intervention.

This is a serious methodological objection and it is why attrition is recorded in full with reasons where known, why completion is reported alongside enrollment rather than instead of it, and why any effectiveness claim requires a comparison condition rather than a single-arm pre-post design. It is also why the first study is a feasibility and instrument-development study rather than an effectiveness trial.

Four: capacity language is a way of locating the problem in the veteran

The objection, and it is the one that matters most in this population: a framework about individual capacity risks implying that a veteran's employment difficulty is a personal deficit, when the evidence in Section II points squarely at employers who cannot read military experience and at a funding structure that pays for credentials rather than translation.

This lands, and the paper accepts the correction. The barrier described in Section IV is a translation failure that sits between the veteran and a civilian labor market that has not learned to read them. It is not a deficit in the veteran, and no MRC material may describe it as one. Formation is offered as one side of a two-sided problem. The employer side is outside this program's present scope, and that is a methodological limitation with a commercial consequence worth naming: a formation program evaluated only on the veteran side can fail an effectiveness trial because the receiving side was never treated. Section VIII therefore requires outcome measurement that separates the two, and any mature version of this offering would have to include standardized capacity evidence a hiring manager can read and calibration on the employer side.

XI. Scope of Practice, Governance, and Referral

first, and the referral rules below are written to protect that promise rather than to quietly undo it. Counselor reporting is limited to attendance, completion, and cohort-level outcome data unless the participant specifically and revocably authorizes more.

- Capacity scores may not be used to determine Chapter 31 eligibility, entitlement, employability, or plan termination. They are developmental instruments and using them as determinations is a misuse regardless of labeling.
- Participation and continued benefit are not linked. Declining or discontinuing the program carries no consequence the provider imposes or recommends.
- Referral and notification are tiered by imminence, and instructors document observable facts rather than diagnoses. Instructors do not screen, assess, or characterize any participant clinically, and are trained explicitly that they are not qualified to do so.
- Where there is imminent danger to the participant or another person, the written emergency-response protocol is followed immediately, and disclosure is limited to what is necessary for safety. This is the only circumstance in which participant information is shared without consent.
- Where there is a non-imminent concern, the instructor privately encourages referral and obtains the participant's consent before notifying the counselor. The participant may decline, and declining has no effect on their standing in the program or on any benefit.

- Where a participant expresses ordinary distress, the instructor provides resource information without characterizing it, without notification, and without recording anything beyond the fact that resources were offered.
- Referral records are held separately from developmental profiles and assessment data, with access limited to the individuals named in the data-handling schedule. An after-hours contact path is published to participants at intake.
- Cohort-level reporting is subject to a minimum cell size so that an aggregate figure cannot be resolved into an individual one.
- The program does not represent itself as a substitute for VA mental health care, peer support, or clinical treatment.

XII. Epistemic Firewall

EQGenix is a Christ-centered firm and does not disguise it. The firm's governing canon holds Scripture as its source of authority and treats empirical science as a corroborating witness rather than a competing one. That is a worldview commitment, declared rather than embedded, and it is not offered as evidence.

The separation is operational and strict, and it is enforced by a language standard: capacity language governs all VA-facing and counselor-facing material, and faith-anchored content is held to a separate track that no Chapter 31 participant encounters as a condition of the program. Curriculum delivered under

authorization contains no religious content, and no participant is asked about belief.

Where the worldview operates is in the judgment that a veteran's capacity to remain present, regulated, and in covenant with the people who depend on them is a more consequential subject than placement speed. That is a value commitment, not an empirical finding, and it is labeled as one.

XIII. What This Paper Does Not Claim

- It does not claim that Mission-Ready Civilian™ improves employment, retention, wages, or any other outcome. No outcome evidence exists.
- It does not claim that other transition programs fail. RAND found an absence of evidence, which is not the same finding, and the distinction is load-bearing.
- It does not claim that VR&E is ineffective. VR&E is one of the programs inside RAND's finding, and the measurement problem described is shared.
- It does not claim that intervening on identity improves employment outcomes. The transition literature cited is qualitative and did not test intervention.
- It does not claim any clinical benefit of any kind.
- It does not claim that the Emotional Portfolio™ has established structural, discriminant, or predictive validity, or measurement invariance in any population.

- It does not claim that the underemployment figure cited is a current or population-representative estimate.
- It does not claim that military service produces a uniform capacity profile, or that any individual veteran arrives with the capacities described.
- It does not claim that Mission-Ready Civilian™ is approved, pre-authorized, or currently purchasable under Chapter 31. Course approval, facility criteria, the VA-facility-first policy, contracting, and counselor determination all govern and none is assumed here.
- It does not claim that any required program duration or dose has been established.

XIV. For the Counselor: What You Are Buying, and What You Are Not

Stated plainly, so that nothing depends on inference.

- What it buys today: cohort-delivered formation on a defined construct set, with entry, exit, and post-program measurement, delivered under the scope constraints in Section XI, by a provider that has disclosed its evidence position in writing.
- What it does not buy: a demonstrated employment effect. There is none, and any provider claiming one in this field should be asked for the study.
- What to tell the veteran: that this is research-informed training rather than a proven intervention, that participation

is voluntary, that their results are theirs, and that declining changes nothing about their entitlement.

- What to ask any provider, including this one: what construct do you claim to change, how is it defined, what do you measure other than attendance and satisfaction, do you measure after the program ends, and who analyzes your results.
- What to verify before authorizing anything: course approval status, facility criteria under §§ 21.290–21.299, whether necessary services are readily available at a VHA facility, and the contracting path. This paper does not assume any of those are satisfied.
- Operational terms — contact hours, cohort structure, completion criteria, pricing, deliverables, contracting entity, insurance, and the authorization workflow — are in the MRC™ VR&E Provider Packet, which governs where it differs from this paper.

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- EQGenix Inc. (2026). Trained for the call, unbuilt for the career: The evidence gap in first responder wellness. Institutional White Paper 003, Research Edition v1.1.
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Revision History

v1.0 (August 2026) — Initial Research Edition. Four-class evidence taxonomy; non-clinical boundary and Claim Equals Delivery standard; disclosure that Veteran Readiness and Employment is itself one of the four largest programs inside the RAND finding; five falsification conditions; four counterarguments engaged by name. v1.1 — Substantive revision: veteran heterogeneity note added, establishing that service does not produce a uniform capacity profile; Chapter 31 authority note added citing 38 CFR §§ 21.290, 21.292, and 21.294, stating that the program is not represented as pre-authorized; Section II broadened; the underemployment figure reclassified as an illustrative reported-data signal; the identity claim reduced from load-bearing construct to persistent variable; the Standard Form 50 comparator corrected; individual change scores withdrawn in favour of developmental profiles; the M-CARM reclassified from candidate primary outcome to candidate convergent and secondary reintegration outcome; the referral protocol tiered by imminence; a staged research design added. v1.2 — Positional revision plus repair of a live contradiction: the scope section had retained a blanket instruction to notify the counselor within one business day of any clinical referral, which conflicted with the tiered consent-based protocol installed at v1.1. v1.3 (this edition) — Five corrections, four of them to overstatements introduced by the positional pass itself. The deck claimed that capacity survives separation, a universal persistence claim the paper's own heterogeneity note contradicts; it now reads that the capacity was built and civilian systems often cannot read it, and Section V states that capacity can persist, weaken through disuse, become context-dependent, or be obscured by injury, stress, or mismatch. The cover converted RAND's evidence-availability finding into an absolute claim that the spending cannot be shown to change outcomes; it now uses RAND's own language. The claim that a veteran employed below capability counts as a success in every federal statistic is bounded to registering as employed and to headline program measures. The claim that almost none of the money goes to the actual problem is bounded to skill translation and employer connection, since translation is not established as the binding constraint. One addition: outcome measurement must now distinguish participant failure from employer-recognition failure, because a formation program evaluated only on the veteran side can fail a trial in which the receiving side was never treated — a methodological limitation with a commercial consequence, now stated in both Section VIII and the fourth counterargument.

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¹⁰ **38 CFR §§ 21.290, 21.292, 21.294, and 21.262 — Course Approval and Facility Selection, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment under 38 U.S.C. Chapter 31**

[ecfr.gov – 38 CFR Part 21, Course Approval and Facility Selection](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-38/chapter-I/part-21)

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