

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH PROGRAM (EDRP) LIBERTY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

LOCATION Liberty County
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Located approximately 40 miles southwest of Savannah, GA, Liberty County is home to a substantial active and retired military population, in addition to thousands of military dependents. In an effort to support military personnel transitioning to the civilian labor force and military spouses, the Liberty County Development Authority asked the Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI²) for assistance in conducting a military related workforce analysis. The research approach used by EI² consisted of gathering information on both the demand for transitioning military and military spouses, and the supply of personnel with the skills and willingness to fill those available positions.

Using surveys, EI² collected information from three primary groups: military personnel transitioning to the civilian labor force; military spouses; and existing industry. The results indicated that though transitioning military personnel and military spouses both face challenges in finding full- and part-time employment, the nature of their difficulties are distinct. Soldiers indicated that the primary difficulty they experience is the inability to transfer their military skill sets to meet the needs of civilian/private sector employers. While military spouses also expressed difficulty in finding the right position for their experience, they face a different set of challenges. Military spouses indicated that they have a lack of support services in the community, including affordable childcare and transportation options. Open-ended response questions also revealed a perception that employers avoid hiring military families, in part because they can be transitory.

Using the results of the survey analysis and supplemental secondary data, the EI² project team developed a series of recommendations for the Liberty County Development Authority to help address the issues raised in the survey. Recommendations addressed four broad areas, including: **building meaningful partnerships** between military families, local employers, and the community; **marketing the skills** held by military families to potential employers, as well as the resources available for transitioning military personnel and employers alike to aid in the transition; **developing the skills** of transitioning military personnel and military spouses through targeted workforce development initiatives to help integrate them into the regional economy; and **expanding supportive services** to improve the quality of life for military families in the region.

Between 1985 and 2000, the Economic Development Research Program (EDRP) provided economic development consulting services to communities throughout Georgia. In 2012, the Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI²) was awarded a five-year grant from the US Economic Development Administration to leverage the university's assets to build regional economic ecosystems that support high-growth entrepreneurship, and improve community capacity to achieve and sustain economic growth. Upon receiving the EDA University Center grant, EI² reintroduced the EDRP as a competitive RFP process.



Saluting soldier at Fort Stewart
Photo from www.stewart.army.mil



Aerial image of Fort Stewart in Liberty County
Photo from www.nashpm.com