



# VetsEXCEL Fellows FAQ

## Your Guide to Getting Started

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### About SFIA & The Program

**What is the Sports & Fitness Industry Association?** SFIA is the leading trade association representing the sports and fitness industry, connecting manufacturers, retailers, brands, and service providers across the entire ecosystem. With approximately 200 member organizations, SFIA drives industry growth through advocacy, research, networking, and professional development programs like VetsEXCEL.

**What is VetsEXCEL?** A four+ month career transition program designed specifically for military veterans entering the sports and fitness industry. Built on SFIA's successful Excelerator Program model, VetsEXCEL adapts proven professional development approaches for veteran career transitions. You'll join a cohort of up to 10 Fellows for targeted professional development, mentorship, and networking.

**What makes VetsEXCEL unique?** • Fellow-led programming model – you will actively facilitate and lead peer discussions • Direct access to sports industry executives and SFIA member organizations • Veteran-to-veteran mentorship from professionals who have made the same transition • Focus on translating military leadership into civilian sports careers

### Candidate Selection

**What makes a strong VetsEXCEL Fellow candidate?** Strong candidates are early-career veterans (within five years of separation) who demonstrate leadership potential, a genuine interest in sports and fitness careers, and a readiness to transition their military skills into successful civilian industry careers. Candidate has an associate degree or is working towards bachelor's or master's degree within two years.

**How are selections made?** The VetsEXCEL Committee reviews applications holistically, considering military experience, career interests, leadership potential, and program commitment.

**What if I do not have direct experience in the sports industry?** No prior experience in the sports industry is required. The program will help veterans explore and enter the industry regardless of background.

**Who is eligible for VetsEXCEL?** The program welcomes veterans from all branches of the Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Space Force, Coast Guard) and all components (Active Duty, Reserves, National Guard) who have received an honorable discharge. Additional eligibility requirements include being within three years of military separation and demonstrated interest in building a sports and fitness industry career.



## Organization Nominations

**Can my organization nominate multiple candidates?** No. Each approved nominating organization (excluding official VetsEXCEL partners) may submit only one (1) nomination for the 2025 cohort to maintain program quality and ensure focused support.

**How does an organization become an approved nominator?** SFIA member organizations must be reviewed and approved by the VetsEXCEL Committee. Contact Glenn Horine ([ghorine@sfia.org](mailto:ghorine@sfia.org)) to begin the approval process.

## Mentorship & Support

**How will I be matched with a mentor?** The VetsEXCEL Leadership Committee carefully matches Fellows with veteran mentors based on military background, industry experience, career interests, and personal preferences. Your mentor is a fellow veteran who has successfully transitioned into the sports industry.

**What can I expect from my mentor?** • Monthly one-on-one meetings (virtual or in-person when possible) • Career development guidance and industry insights • Help translating military skills to civilian opportunities • Strategic professional networking introductions • Honest perspective on career paths and growth opportunities • Shared experiences from their own military-to-civilian journey

## Time Commitment

**How much time does the program require?** Expect 3-5 hours monthly for core activities: Monthly check-ins with your cohort, Brunch 'N Learn sessions, one-on-one mentoring meetings, plus additional time for opening/closing workshops.

**What does "Fellow-led programming" mean?** You will take active roles in facilitating group discussions, leading peer sessions, and contributing to program content. This builds your leadership skills while creating value for the entire cohort.

**Can I participate while working full-time?** Yes. This is designed as a supplemental, part-time program to complement your current professional activities, not replace them.

**What if I have accessibility needs?** SFIA is committed to ensuring all Fellows can fully participate. Any accommodation needs will be addressed to support your success.

## Program Benefits

**What's included in my Fellowship?** • All program costs covered by SFIA • Travel reimbursement will be provided if necessary • Professional development materials • Access to exclusive industry events • One-on-one veteran mentor • Access to Excelerator Alumni and Mentors network • Career coaching and resume support • Recognition as an emerging industry leader



**What support is available for job placement?** While not a job placement program, VetsEXCEL provides networking, mentorship, and industry connections that may lead to career opportunities for Fellows. You will have the chance to build relationships with SFIA member organizations and those with Veteran-based Employee Resource Groups.

## Expected Outcomes

**What should I realistically expect from VetsEXCEL?** A job is not guaranteed, but Fellows will gain valuable career advantages:

- **Industry network** - Direct connections with sports and fitness professionals and SFIA member organizations
- **Professional credibility** - Recognition as a VetsEXCEL Fellow and "vetted" candidate
- **Career clarity** - A better understanding of industry sectors and functional roles that match your interests
- **Enhanced skills** - Leadership development through Fellow-led programming and peer facilitation
- **Ongoing support** - Long-term access to mentor relationships and alums network, including the Excelsior program
- **Market knowledge** - Industry insights and trends that inform career decisions

## Career Opportunities

**What career paths are available in sports and fitness?** Opportunities span major industry sectors and functional areas:

- **SFIA Industry Sectors:** • Professional leagues and teams • Equipment manufacturing and retail • Youth sports organizations • National governing bodies
- **Functional Roles:** • Marketing and communications • Finance and business operations • Human resources and talent development • Information technology and data analytics • Product development and innovation • Sales and business development • Procurement and supply chain management • Government affairs and policy • Research and performance analysis

## Key Dates & Getting Started

**When does the program officially start?** • Initial Group Call: Week of October 13, 2025 • Kickoff: Veterans Day Week (November 10-14, 2025) • Program runs through early 2026

**What should I prepare before starting?** • Complete and current LinkedIn profile • Professional mindset for networking and learning • Openness to peer leadership opportunities • Commitment to full program participation



## Maximizing Your Experience

**How can I get the most from my Fellowship?** • Actively engage in Fellow-led programming • Build genuine relationships with mentors and peers • Be proactive in your mentor relationship – come prepared with questions and goals • Leverage industry connections for informational interviews • Take initiative in group discussions and activities • Stay open to exploring different career paths within sports and fitness

**How do I stay connected after the program?** You will join a network of VetsEXCEL alums and maintain connections with SFIA member organizations. The relationships you build during these five months often continue throughout your career.

## Questions

**Who do I contact if I have questions?** As a candidate (and pre-Fellow selection), please submit questions to [vetsexcel@sfia.org](mailto:vetsexcel@sfia.org).