



2026/27 VetsEXCEL

An SFIA Career Transition Program

Eligibility, Application Process, and Forms

VETSEXCEL COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE

VetsEXCEL is an SFIA Career Transition Program administered by SFIA and a hand-selected leadership committee providing strategic oversight and operational guidance.

Leadership Committee Composition:

- **SFIA Representatives (2):** Program facilitator and SFIA COO
- **SFIA Member Veterans (2):** Recommended through People & Culture Committee
- **VetsEXCEL Partners (up to 2)**
- **At-Large Members (up to 1):** Additional industry and veteran community representatives
- **Co-Chairs:** Selected from committee membership to provide leadership

Leadership Committee Responsibilities:

- Program oversight and strategic direction
- Application process and form development
- Programming initiatives and curriculum guidance
- Fellow selection
- Partnership development and stakeholder engagement

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

SFIA offers an incredible opportunity for military veterans to transition their leadership skills, discipline, and teamwork experience into rewarding civilian careers in the sports and fitness industry. VetsEXCEL represents our commitment to supporting America's military heroes as they navigate this important career change.

This four-month+ cohort experience runs from November 2026 through February 2027, with potential in-person kick-off and closing events. It features a targeted curriculum designed by industry leaders who understand both military experience and the needs of the sports industry. Selected applicants are **Fellows** in the program, building their network, exploring career paths, and gaining the insights needed to launch successful civilian careers in sports and fitness.

The 2026/27 cohort will include up to 12 carefully selected Fellows. The VetsEXCEL Committee will oversee the selection and delivery of programs, ensuring maximum impact for each participant.



Program Partners & Supporters:

- SFIA member organizations, military transition organizations, industry mentors, and executives

Candidates are required to provide three references – preferably associated with the candidate’s military experience.

FELLOW ELIGIBILITY

Candidates must meet these criteria:

- **Military Service:** Honorably discharged from any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces and all components
- **Recent Transition:** Must have transitioned from the military within the last five years
- **Industry Interest:** Demonstrated passion for building a career in sports and fitness
- **Education:** Hold an associate degree or be working toward the completion of a bachelor’s or master’s degree within the next two years
- **Leadership Potential:** Evidence of leadership capabilities and professional growth mindset
- **Commitment:** Available to participate fully in program activities with attendance at both in-person events mandatory

***Please note:** This is a supplemental, part-time endeavor. This is not a full-time commitment, although attendance at kick-off and closing events is required. The program is intended to complement any ongoing professional development.*

SELECTION PROCESS

Timeline:

1. **Application (Fellow candidates and mentors) Window Opens:** Week of August 10, 2026
2. **Application Deadline:** September 18, 2026 (6-week application window)
3. **Application Review Period:** Week of September 21, 2026
4. **Fellow & Mentor Pairing Announcement:** Week of September 28, 2026
5. **Selection Notification:** Week of October 5, 2026
6. **Initial Group Call:** Week of October 12, 2026
7. **Kick-off:** Around Veterans Day Week 2026 (potentially in-person between November 7-9 or 15-17, 2026 at TBD market)
8. **Closing:** NHL Stadium Series in Dallas, TX – February 18-20, 2027 (Exact dates to be confirmed)



Selection Criteria:

- Military service record and leadership experience
- Demonstrated interest in sports and fitness industry
- Potential for career growth and industry contribution
- Commitment to program participation
- Contribution to cohort diversity
- Alignment with fellow-led programming model

What's included in my Fellowship?

All program costs covered by SFIA, all travel expenses for confirmed in-person events fully covered (airfare or mileage, lodging, ground transportation, and event hospitality), 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, and recognition as an emerging industry leader.

2026/27 VetsEXCEL Reference Form

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Organization Name: _____

Reference Name: _____

Title: _____

Contact Information:

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

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REFERENCE INFORMATION

Organization Name: _____

Reference Name: _____

Title: _____

Contact Information:

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

2026/27 VetsEXCEL FELLOW APPLICATION

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Full Name: _____ Date: _____

Current Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: (____) _____ Email: _____

LinkedIn Profile and URL: _____

(Required - must be current and complete)

MILITARY SERVICE INFORMATION

Branch of Service: _____

Rank at Separation: _____

Years of Service: _____ Separation Date: _____

Military Occupation: _____

Deployment History: _____

Type of Discharge: ☐ Honorable (Required - must attach DD-214)



DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION *(Optional)*

Ethnicity *(Check one)*: ☐ African American/Black ☐ American Indian/Alaskan Native
☐ Asian/Pacific Islander ☐ Latino/Hispanic ☐ White ☐ Other: _____

Gender *(Check one)*: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other

ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Do you have accessibility needs we should be aware of? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe: _____

SFIA is committed to ensuring all Fellows can fully participate in program activities.

CURRENT SITUATION

Current Employment Status: ☐ Currently Employed ☐ Seeking Employment ☐ In School/Training
☐ Starting Business

Current Employer/School: _____

Position/Program: _____

SFIA Member Organization Connection *(if applicable)*:

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Please provide detailed responses. Attach additional pages if needed.

1. Describe a time when you had to quickly learn something completely new or adapt to a major change. This could be from military service, civilian work, volunteer activities, or personal experiences. How did you approach this challenge?



2. What draws you to the sports and fitness industry? Share what you've learned through research, conversations, or experiences that reinforced your interest in this field.
3. Tell us about a significant obstacle you've overcome. Focus on your thought process, the resources you used, and what you learned from the experience. This can be from any area of your life.
4. What specific skills or experiences do you want to develop through VetsEXCEL to reach these goals?



5. What unique perspective, skills, or experiences do you bring that would contribute to both the cohort's success and the sports industry's growth?

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Please attach:

- **Current resume** (2 pages maximum)
- **Up-to-date LinkedIn profile and URL**
- **Copy of DD-214**
- **Three professional references** with complete contact information (name, title, email, and best available phone number)

Certification: I certify that all information provided is accurate and complete. I understand that participation in the VetsEXCEL program requires **full** commitment to program activities and professional conduct. I confirm that I meet all eligibility requirements, including honorable discharge, and recent transition timeline (within five years of separation). I understand that the program includes fellow-led components, and I am prepared to participate in peer leadership opportunities actively.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Please submit this completed application form with the additional requirements above via email to vetsexcel@sfia.org by September 18th, 2026.