



## **National Governors Association Center for Best Practices Mission Growth Working Group Federal Recommendations**

The federal government is the catalyst for the rapid and significant growth around the nation's military bases, yet it provides limited support to help states impacted by the growth and few federal programs that specifically assist with growth efforts. As a result, states are trying to access federal programs and resources that were created to address very different challenges and often face qualifications and regulations that restrict their usage. However, a number of changes and realignments could help remedy this problem. To alleviate the workforce development, education, and transportation burdens of impacted states, the Mission Growth Working Group (see Appendix) offers the following recommendations to the federal government:<sup>1</sup>

### **Cross-Cutting Recommendations**

**Direct federal agencies to afford priority consideration to mission growth communities under Executive Order 12788.** Presidential [Executive Order 12788](#) directs executive agencies to afford priority consideration to requests from mission growth communities for federal technical assistance and financial resources.<sup>2</sup> This executive order should be widely applied. For example, federal agencies were recently allowed special hiring authority to non-competitively appoint military spouses to positions in the civil service.

**Promote federal inter-operational collaboration and partnerships through the Economic Adjustment Committee.** Mission growth actions cross-cut a number of departments and agencies within the federal government, including the departments of Defense (DoD), Transportation, Commerce, Labor, and Education to name just a few. This myriad of administrations, agencies, funding sources, regulations, and responsibilities needlessly complicates—and in some cases prohibits—the kind of true alliances and collaborations that are necessary to provide seamless services at the state and local level. To maximize federal support, federal partner agencies should strive to align federal programs, oversight, and regulations; consolidate redundancy and conflicting regulations where possible; and establish transparent levels of responsibility and accountability. The Economic Adjustment Committee (EAC) is

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<sup>2</sup> Executive Order 12788, Section 5(b)(2), as amended on May 12, 2005 states that all executive agencies shall "Afford priority consideration to requests from Defense-affected communities for Federal technical assistance, financial resources, excess or surplus property, or other requirements, that are part of a comprehensive plan used by the Committee."

uniquely positioned to address these efforts and has the charge to facilitate and support the necessary federal agency relationships.<sup>3</sup>

Example of agency partnership: The [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) between DoD and the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of this MOU is to establish a framework for collaboration between these two agencies to address the quality of education and the unique challenges faced by children of military families.

**Create specific mission growth program assistance.** Federal program assistance specifically targeted for mission growth and designed to meet the unique challenges of states that are home to a growing military base will help ensure that adequate resources are available for planning, integrating, and implementing successful projects and strategies.

**Establish federal clearinghouse of mission growth strategies:** A clearinghouse of state best practices related to mission growth should be established at the federal level. The sharing of this information would be helpful to mission growth states and communities. For example, workforce activities performed under the Department of Labor’s BRAC-related National Emergency Grants could be tracked to help states share promising practices and prepare future workforce plans.

## **Workforce Recommendations**

**Provide clear and timely DoD workforce information.** DoD should provide workforce information via a comprehensive, secure, Web-based format on military personnel and DoD civilian growth and update it on at least a quarterly basis. Information should include the number and arrival time of incoming military and federal civilian personnel, spouses, and family members; the number and type of jobs; and a timeline of job availability. This will encourage communities and incoming commands to establish a working relationship to share onsite information in real time.

**Adjust current programs to be more flexible.** Current federal programs that offer “growth assistance” should be made more flexible to meet the distinct needs of mission growth states. For example:

- Federal programs should allow states to amend their state workforce plans to accommodate mission growth strategies;
- Federal funding opportunities should be linked to DoD’s transition timetable and budget cycle so that federal support is available to mission growth states and communities for the duration of the impact of DoD-related growth;
- Federal funding could be available for a broader range of activities including planning, implementation, recruitment, retention, training, and education;

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<sup>3</sup> Under Executive Order 12788, the Secretary of Defense, or the Secretary's designee, chairs the Economic Adjust Committee (EAC) and the Secretaries of Labor and Commerce serve as Vice Chairmen. Other members of the EAC include the Secretary of Agriculture, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of Interior, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Treasury, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Administrator of General Services, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, and the Postmaster General.

- Federal programs should allow states to designate incoming military spouses as eligible for the dislocated worker program to increase the access and availability of education and training opportunities; and
- Federal funding should be available for career counseling at military bases to prepare new and existing staff for workforce development adjustments.

## **Education Recommendations**

**Provide clear and timely DoD military dependent student information.** DoD should provide more accurate and timely data via a comprehensive, secure, Web-based format on military dependent students who will arrive with military personnel and federal civilian personnel. Information should include the number of students, age of students, special needs requirements, and a timeline of student arrival. Information on the number of incoming military spouses who are teachers would also help states with teacher recruitment efforts. This information should be provided to growth states and communities and updated on a quarterly basis.

**Adjust current programs to be more flexible.** Current federal programs that offer “growth assistance” should be made more flexible to meet the distinct needs of mission growth states. For example, federal funding opportunities should be linked to DoD’s transition timetable and budget cycle so that federal support is available to mission growth states and communities for the duration of the impact of DoD-related growth. Another example would be to make federal funding available for a broader range of activities including planning, implementation, recruitment, retention, training, and education.

**Adjust Impact Aid programs.** The impact aid programs at both the U.S. Department of Education and DoD should be adjusted to:

- Provide funding before the students arrive, rather than up to two years after. The funds should be based on the quarterly student growth estimates provided by DoD;
- Factor in to funding formulas students residing with parents who are employed on federal property (military base); and
- Make new school construction eligible for funding under all impact aid programs.

**Factor “Block Leave” into No Child Left Behind framework.** Military personnel are expected to spend time with their families before and after they are deployed. Under these circumstances, military dependent students often take “block leave.” However, these absences can affect a school’s Adequate Years Progress (AYP). To avoid this situation, special consideration should be given to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) impacted by block leave absences.

**Offer interest-free bond or loan options for school construction.** To expedite the construction of education facilities, interest-free federal bond and loan programs should be made available to mission growth states and communities. These programs could expire in three years (end of 2011) when most military moves will be complete.

## **Transportation Recommendations**

**Provide clear and timely DoD military personnel migration data.** DoD should provide military personnel migration information via a comprehensive, secure, Web-based format with

data on military and DoD civilian growth and update it on at least a quarterly basis. Information should include the number and arrival time of incoming military personnel, spouses, family members, and civilian employees.

**Include mission growth transportation projects in new infrastructure investments:** The transportation needs in many mission growth states and communities are immediate and significant. DoD's Office of Economic Adjustment estimates that there are a considerable amount of transportation projects in need of funding. For those projects that are part of a state transportation improvement program and/or that are required as a result of BRAC development making new federal funds available would allow work on these projects to begin promptly. By including mission growth transportation projects as eligible infrastructure projects for new federal funds, important improvements can be made while creating jobs and strengthening national security. Funding for mission growth projects should not impact existing state transportation priorities.

**Adjust current programs to be more flexible.** Current federal programs that offer "growth assistance" should be made more flexible to meet the distinct needs of mission growth states. For example, federal funding opportunities should be linked to DoD's transition timetable and budget cycle so that federal support is available to mission growth states and communities for the duration of the impact of DoD-related growth.

**Amend DoD's Defense Access Road (DAR) program.** The Defense Access Road (DAR) Program at DoD should be adjusted as follows:

- Establish benchmarks. There should be clear traffic-impact-related benchmarks that trigger the initiation of a DAR project. Such benchmarks should assess the impact a defense action has on transportation infrastructure using a "level of service" standard.<sup>4</sup> After a benchmark is met, base commanders should be required to submit projects for DAR consideration.
- Involve state and local transportation authorities early in the process. Base commanders should regularly solicit the input of state and local transportation authorities. For example, a local transportation authority could better inform the base commander of upcoming transportation challenges. By maintaining regular and meaningful contact with state and local transportation authorities, base commanders could identify traffic concerns before they become unmanageable allowing them to initiate the DAR process sooner.
- Adjust eligibility requirements. DoD should adjust DAR eligibility requirements to better meet the unique and urgent transportation challenges of mission growth states and communities. Suggested adjustments to eligibility criteria include:
  - *Modify the traffic threshold requirement.* One of the criteria that triggers DAR eligibility is if a defense action causes traffic to double outside a base. This is a high threshold to meet, particularly in urban areas that already experience high levels of traffic congestion and where increases can result in gridlock. In light of this challenge, the traffic threshold requirement should be adjusted.
  - *Broaden the array of eligible transportation projects.* The DAR program does not cover a full range of transportation impacts and requirements. For example, DoD often focuses on transportation projects that directly lead to the gate of a base and rarely provides support for the broader transportation needs such as

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<sup>4</sup> "Level of service" standard could be based on that described in the Highway Capacity Manual published by the Transportation Research Board.

those that result from the “ripple effect” of a growing base. The DAR program should recognize as eligible those projects where defense actions cause an increase in traffic volume and subsequent decrease in level of service. Additional eligible transportation projects should include transit-related improvements and traffic mitigation measures.

- Expedite DAR funding approval. The time it takes to receive DAR funding confirmation is unpredictable. In some cases, the cost of road construction can increase significantly between the request for DAR assistance and funding notification. The sooner a state or locality knows that federal money will be provided, the quicker it can move forward and lock in the cost of a transportation project.
- Establish a separate and distinct funding source for DAR approved projects. This will prevent DAR approved projects from competing for funding with on-base infrastructure requests.

**Improve the NEPA review process to be more efficient and timely.** Nearly all transportation projects in mission growth communities must go through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, which can include developing complicated and lengthy Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). Given the short timeframe before a mission growth population arrives, NEPA compliance (including any EIS necessary for mission growth projects) should be completed in a timely fashion to expedite the actual construction of transportation infrastructure. One way to achieve this is to adequately fund the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to fulfill its role in providing NEPA compliance assistance and staff training for other federal agencies. Federal agencies conducting these reviews should conduct their work concurrently so as to further reduce the amount of time needed for the review process. In addition, state and federal agencies processing NEPA reviews for mission growth projects should be adequately funded and staffed as well as given the necessary tools and training to carry out timely NEPA reviews.

**Expand shuttle bus capacity to meet transit demands of mission growth.** Shuttle bus service would alleviate pressures on state highways resulting from BRAC developments as well assist state efforts to improve transit service. Modified shuttle bus service should provide federally owned or leased passenger carrier buses to transport incoming BRAC-relocated employees between mass transit facilities, such as commuter rail and subway stations, and their place of work. Although there is federal authority<sup>5</sup> for modified shuttle bus service, only a handful of installations and their tenants currently provide the service for their employees. Increased funding for shuttles should be provided to the installations and allow greater flexibility to provide the service. Amending DoD Regulation 4500.36-R would help eliminate barriers to shuttle service at military installations.

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<sup>5</sup>Authority grants via 31 U.S.C.S. § 1344; DoD regulation 4500.36-R; and a December 2006 memorandum issued by Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England.

## APPENDIX

### **National Governors Association Center for Best Practices Mission Growth Working Group**

The National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices leads a Mission Growth Working Group, which consists of states that are significantly impacted by the growth of military bases. The group includes state representatives from **Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia**. The group is co-chaired by state representatives from Georgia and Maryland. The effort is supported by DoD's Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA). The Working Group's goal is to enhance the relationship between states, military communities, and military bases, with a particular focus on addressing growth issues outside the military fence line. The working group identified in priority order workforce development, education, and transportation as the top challenges mission growth states face.

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