



Elizabeth O'Brien

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U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

Elizabeth O'Brien is the senior director of the Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Program, a program dedicated to measurably impacting military spouse unemployment and underemployment through Hiring Our Heroes' overarching strategies of grassroots engagement and public-private partnerships.

O'Brien joined the Hiring Our Heroes team in 2014 and evolved the military spouse program's event-centric focus to become a comprehensive resource at the forefront of military spouse employment. In addition to overseeing the program's research and strategic operations, she co-chairs the Military Spouse Employment Advisory Council, a coalition of companies with innovative spouse recruitment and retention initiatives that focuses on developing and promoting best practices and strategies that effectively address the unique employment challenges military spouses face.

One of O'Brien's first initiatives as director was the acquisition of a chapter-based military spouse professional network consisting of 17 chapters and 3,000 members. Now known as the Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Professional Network (MSPN), today the Network includes 50 location-specific networks and 11,000 members worldwide. O'Brien subsequently sought to enhance the educational arm of the spouse program and, along with the University of North Carolina-Wilmington, in 2017 conducted research for the program's first military spouse employment-specific study, *Military Spouses in the Workplace: Understanding the Impacts of Spouse Unemployment on Military Recruitment, Retention and Readiness*. The study's far-reaching impacts have led to its frequent citations; it has been referenced by Congress and the White House, as well as by numerous industry professionals and media outlets. O'Brien also launched Hiring Our Heroes' annual Military Spouse Employment Summit series in 2017, with participation from Dr. Jill Biden, Counselor to the President Kellyanne Conway, and Small Business Administrator Linda McMahon.

Under O'Brien's direction, the military spouse program most recently launched the Military Spouse Economic Empowerment Zones (MSEEZ), a national initiative to encourage and codify communities' commitment to impacting military spouse unemployment rates by assisting with the creation of military spouse talent pipelines.

O'Brien is a member of the SBA Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs, was a guest lecturer at the 2018 Association of Defense Communities Summit, and frequently appears on national and regional media speaking on military spouse employment.

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