

# WHITE PAPER – JUSTIFICATION

## EMERGENCY SUBMISSION FOR OMB APPROVAL OF “IBM SKILLSBUILD TRAINING PROGRAM APPLICATION” VA FORM 22-10282

November 30, 2022

By Electronic Submission  
The Office of Management and Budget (OMB)  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear OIRA Desk Officer:

Based upon a recent White House Cyber Initiative, as supported by VA Principal Deputy Under Secretary for VA Benefits, Mr. Michael Frueh, VA continues to seek ways to improve education and benefit programs for Veterans and their beneficiaries. In collaboration with IBM, the Department of Veterans Affairs will administer a new educational training program entitled “IBM Skillsbuild.” The IBM SkillsBuild Pilot Training Program is an IBM-sponsored training program to provide free online training in a variety of Information Technology (IT) areas. This free online learning platform will provide adult learners access to IT skills training and create career pathways to fill “in-demand” technology jobs.

IBM SkillsBuild will offer access to courses ranging from, Collaboration and Presentation, Data Analytics, Cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Cloud Computing. These free course offerings help create pathways for career success for our Nation’s Veterans. IBM will provide diagnostics, online coursework, resume-building credentials, and 1:1 mentoring to military members, Veterans, and dependents. These participants can earn IBM-branded digital credentials to certify their relevant skills in emerging technologies and related proficiencies to prepare them for successful careers in technology. This pilot program has already been successfully deployed to neurodivergent learners worldwide and university students from underrepresented communities in the United States. VA is excited to also have an opportunity to expand this no-cost Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) job training to Veterans. These collaborations underscore IBM’s focus on providing STEM jobs training to traditionally underrepresented communities as part of its commitment to skill 30 million people worldwide by 2030 and to create equitable, inclusive economic opportunities while addressing a longstanding technology skill shortage.

VA feels this program is a unique and urgent need that would provide many pathways to employment and career success for our Veterans and their dependents. This partnership with IBM will offer our beneficiaries a unique opportunity to obtain the skills and find job opportunities across companies and industries. Participants will be provided the tools and resources to complete training within four months of starting the program, with a minimum commitment of 8-10 training hours per week. Employment assistance will be provided through IBM upon successful completion.

IBM Skillsbuild will be an enhanced resource for transitioning Service members and Veterans seeking job training and credentials through the VA to pursue a career after military service. In

collaboration with the VA's Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET-TEC) Employer Consortium, IBM will help military Veterans and their beneficiaries pursue customized learning paths and work roles for high-demand technology careers. Free access to Industry-leading tech content, badges, and certifications as follows:

- Fortinet and Red Hat Certification courses; certification prep and free exam vouchers
- IBM digital badges provide credentials critical to employers. Badges include Working in a Digital World, Agile Explorer, Mindfulness, Job Application Essentials, Cybersecurity Fundamentals, Introduction to Data Analysis, IBM Z System Administrator, Customer Service, Web Development, Being an Entrepreneur
- 6 weeks of a "train the trainer model" from IBM on how to use the platform to drive technology adoption and implementation within your organization
- Ongoing technical support and platform updates from IBM
- Access to granular reporting on learner progress and badges earned with the ability to customize learning paths most relevant to learners
- Access to IBM mentors to guide learners' career trajectory
- Partnership and co-creation of project-based learning opportunities and work fairs for learners

Therefore, we would like to develop an intake form to allow our beneficiaries to register and apply for the program. The applicant must be a Veteran, Service member, or dependent. Registration for this training opportunity will be on a first-come, first-served basis to begin at least ten (10) days before the first cohort begins pending MOU/MOA agreement being signed. Currently, the intake form will be submitted to VA via Email, until VA has sufficient time to allow the receipt of the application electronically.

The use of normal clearance procedures, which will take at least 90 days, would hinder the mission of this program which is to upskill/reskill Veterans quickly and prepare them to fill the "in-demand" tech roles.

If you have any questions, please contact Rochelle Foxworth, VA Privacy Act Officer, at [Rochelle.Foxworth@va.gov](mailto:Rochelle.Foxworth@va.gov).

Sincerely,

Tom Alphonso  
Education Service - Assistant Director, Program Management