

## Air Force SkillBridge Program Frequently Asked Questions

4 February 2020

### **Q1: What is the SkillBridge (SKB) Program? Is it the same as the Career Skills Program (CSP)?**

**A1:** Both terms, “SkillBridge” and “Career Skills Program,” are used interchangeably under Department of Defense (DoD) SKB Program. SKB provides eligible Airmen (officer and enlisted) opportunities to develop their career skills through civilian on-the-job training, employment skills training, apprenticeships, and internships to help them prepare to transition from the military to civilian employment. SKB training leads to a high probability of civilian employment.

### **Q2: Where can we find a list of authorized SkillBridge training opportunities?**

**A2:** There are a variety of websites that provide access to accredited training opportunities. In addition, the DoD launched a SKB website <https://dodskillbridge.usalearning.gov/> that contains authorized SKB Partners with signed DoD Memorandum of Understandings (MoU). This website also includes a location map identifying cohort training locations at military installations. Please contact your local Education & Training Center (E&TC) for additional SKB resources.

### **Q3: Can Airmen participate in sister-service SkillBridge programs that are vetted and DoD approved?**

**A3:** Yes. Although the DoD SKB website provides SKB Partner programs and contact information, it is important to know that the sister-service staff controls ALL SKB rules and processes at their installations in compliance with their service-specific regulations and existing SKB MoUs. If an Airman wants to participate in a SKB program at a sister-service location, the E&TC should coordinate with the sister-service SKB staff to confirm the application process, sister-service approval, program vetting and cohort placement before the Airman is approved and authorized departing home station.

### **Q4: How does SkillBridge fit into the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)?**

**A4:** SKB is aligned under the base E&TC and their Education Specialists are the primary points of contact. The Airmen & Family Readiness Center (A&FRC) markets SKB during their TAP briefings. It’s imperative that the A&FRC is informed of Airmen participating in SKB and the associated timelines to ensure that they complete congressionally mandated TAP requirements. The DoD strongly recommends that members complete as much of their Service’s TAP as possible prior to starting a SKB program. This ensures that members are well informed of all their post-Service options prior to entering a SKB program.

### **Q5: When am I eligible to participate in a SkillBridge training program?**

**A5:** Airmen can participate in a SKB training program no earlier than 180 days prior to their separation or retirement date. The exact time-frame depends on the length of their approved training programs.

### **Q6: Can Airmen being evaluated by a Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) participate in SkillBridge without a DOS?**

**A6:** Airmen who have been directed into the Disability Evaluation System (DES) by AFPC/Medical Retention Standards (DP2NP), as seen on their FL4, can apply as an exception to policy. Airmen must maintain contact with their PEBLO and must remain available to participate in the timely processing of their case, including attending examinations. These Airmen should contact the E&TC so their unique situations can be worked on a case-by-case basis.

### **Q7: What if my Date Of Separation (DOS)/Date Of Retirement (DOR) is not correct in the Air Force Virtual Education Center (AFVEC)?**

**A7:** For members retiring or separating prior to their contractual DOS/DOR, verification of an approved separation or retirement orders must be submitted to the E&TC in order to update the DOS/DOR reflected in the AFVEC. This allows members to submit their online SKB application. Note: the contractual date will flow back to AFVEC in 24 hours.

**Q8: When is the earliest date from my DOS/DOR that I can apply for SkillBridge?**

**A8:** IAW the SkillBridge Personnel Service Delivery (PSD) Guide, members can submit SKB applications 12 months prior to their DOS/DOR and NLT than 30 days prior to their requested SKB training start date. The Vetting Checklist must be completed prior to submitting the online Air Force Virtual Education Center (AFVEC) SKB Application. The training start date must be within 180 days from the member's DOS/DOR.

**Q9: Can Airmen change their DOS to meet the SkillBridge 180-day eligibility window?**

**A9:** Yes. The Prior to Expiration Term of Service (PETS) Program allows Airmen to change their DOS to an earlier date for a variety of reasons, including the desire to align their separation dates with SKB opportunities. Contact your local MPS Career Development section.

**Q10: What are the general steps to apply for a SkillBridge Program?**

**A10:** Airmen who want to apply for a SKB Program should complete the following steps:

Step 1: Receive counseling from your local Education Specialist, at E&TC.

Step 2: Research company training options to determine opportunities and training timelines.

Step 3: Ensure your supervisor and leadership support your participation.

Step 4: Complete the paper-based Air Force SkillBridge Program Vetting Checklist with the company.

Step 5: Work with E&TC to complete the Vetting Checklist accurately, with a detailed training plan and schedule.

Step 6: Submit an online AFVEC SKB Application for the E&TC and commander approval.

Step 7: The E&TC will submit Permissive Temporary Duty (PTDY) requests for over 30 days to AFPC/DP2SST.

Step 8: The member uploads the approved SKB application and PTDY approval in LeaveWeb.

Step 9: At the end of training, complete the mandatory AFVEC SKB Exit Survey (to obtain DoD required stats).

Note: The online SKB Application/Memorandum of Participation (MoP) and the Exit Survey are located at

<https://afvec.us.af.mil/afvec/LoginInformation.aspx>

**Q11: Can a commander receive a backfill for a member participating in SkillBridge?**

**A11:** No. The commander releases the Airman only if the mission allows. A replacement will not be provided.

**Q12: Can a commander disapprove a SkillBridge training request? Is there an appeal process or a waiver authority if disapproved?**

**A12:** Yes, the commander can disapprove SKB training requests. No, there is no appeal process or waiver authority, because the decision and authority rests with the first field grade commander in the member's chain of command.

**Q13: Can a certificate program qualify for SkillBridge?**

**A13:** Yes, if the courses required to obtain the certificate meet the requirements outlined in DoDI 1322.29, Enclosure 4.2., which states that training, pre-apprenticeships, or apprenticeships should meet all SKB program criteria and be accredited by approved agencies.

**Q14: Can Airmen stationed overseas participate in SkillBridge?**

**A14:** Yes. However, training opportunities with companies overseas have not been approved at this time. Depending on their career goals, members can pursue training opportunities stateside, which is authorized IAW AFI 36-2649, AFGM 2019-01 4 Jun 2019, paragraph 11.1.4.9 Permissive TDY (PTDY). Additionally, IAW the SKB PSD Guide, paragraph 7.8.6.2., AFPC/DP2SST approves all PTDY requests exceeding 30 days. Airmen stationed overseas must work closely with their leadership and find training timelines that work within current mission requirements.

**Q15: Can I participate in DoD SkillBridge with an overseas provider?**

**A15:** As of Jan 2020, the Air Force has no official approval process for overseas SKB providers. See above question 13. Whether stationed overseas or stateside, eligibility is currently limited to stateside training opportunities.

**Q16: Can a member participate in SkillBridge to complete an internship requirement as part of a degree program?**

**A16:** Yes. Only if the internship (practicum, student teaching, clinical, etc.) falls within the member's eligibility window for SKB (180 days prior to DOS/DOR). In addition, all other internship and degree requirements must be met upon program completion. Such programs will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the E&TC and AFPC/DPSST.

**Q17: Who is responsible for any injuries that Service members may occur while participating in a SKB program?**

**A17:** Military Departments will be responsible for Service members' medical care in the event of non-negligent injury, accident, and death while participating in an approved SKB program.

**Q18: My family has a business. Am I authorized to select the business as a provider for my SkillBridge program?**

**A18:** These requests are very unique and they will be reviewed on case-by-case basis. These opportunities may have distinct requirements and/or time limitations. The Air Force SkillBridge Program Vetting Checklist must include a comprehensive training schedule and training plan with detailed goals, objectives, and assessed outcomes.

**Q19: I am approved for a SkillBridge training program with a real estate company and cannot be paid during my program participation. Can the broker hold commission funds until after the training program is completed?**

**A19:** No. IAW DoDI 1332.29, Enclosure 4.1.c. Members are not eligible to receive compensation, wages, pay, training stipends or any other form of financial compensation from provider for the time that the Service members spend participating in a training program.

**Q20: Can I participate in an on-base SkillBridge program?**

**A20:** Yes. A MoU and/or Addendum to a current MoU will be required. Interning with federal contractors requires additional legal and contracting reviews.

**Q21: My commander approved my SkillBridge program and I am actively participating with a provider. Can my unit require me to participate in mandatory PT, PT testing, or drug testing during my SkillBridge program?**

**A21:** Yes, commanders may maintain these requirements for their Airmen participating in a local SKB training program. IAW AFI 36-2649, AFGM 4 Jun 2019, paragraph 11.1.3.1.3. Units maintain daily accountability of Airmen participating and may require unit formations, physical training, and other unit requirements.

**Q22: If the commander who approved my SkillBridge recently PCS'd, do I need to complete a new application with the new commander? What happens if I am already in the SKB Program?**

**A22:** No. Your original application is valid and there is no need for new commander to re-approve. However, be aware that IAW, AFI 36-2649 AFGM 4 Jun 2019, paragraph 11.1.3. Unit/Squadron Commanders may terminate the SKB participation of their Airmen based on mission requirements.

**Q23: Are retirement orders required for members to participate before submitting a SkillBridge package?**

**A23:** If the member's DOS/DOR is changed from their contractual date, it will not update in MilPDS or AFVEC. This could put the member outside of the SKB 180-day eligibility window. The member MUST provide an approved DOS/DOR to the E&TC staff who will update it in AFVEC, which will allow the member to apply for SKB. The DOS change is only valid for 24 hours and changes back to contractual DOS with automated data flow from MilPDS.

**Q24: Can I request my retirement application be expedited so that I may request participate in SkillBridge program?**

**A24:** No. To keep the process fair, retirement applications are worked on a first-in, first-out basis. Due to current workload, normal application processing time is 4-6 weeks from receipt of the commander's recommendation. Applicants should factor in this processing time when applying to participate in a SKB program.

**Q25: If I am separating from the military, will I have my separation orders before I leave the base? How do I get a copy of my separation orders earlier so I may participate in SKB?**

**A25:** Separation orders are not required to participate in SKB. SKB eligibility and participation can be determined/accomplished with the member's established Contractual DOS in AFAEMS/AFVEC. However, if a member is separating from the Air Force and approved for training outside of local area, there is a process to expedite the orders. These applications are generally approved approximately 7 months prior to a member's DOS. For more details, read myPers, Revised Article 12713, complete the online request form, and provide verification of SKB application approval from your field grade commander <https://mypers.af.mil/app/dynamicforms/display/form/186>

**Q26: How/when do I arrange my Household Goods (HHG) pick-up and delivery while participating in a SkillBridge program?**

**A26:** Once members receive their separation/retirement orders, then their HHG shipments can be arranged. For Airmen who are separating, see above question on how to expedite orders.

**Q27: Can I receive an extension to my High Year of Tenure (HYT) so that I can apply for the SkillBridge program?**

**A27:** No. HYT Extensions are only approved for rare circumstances. To qualify for a HYT adjustment, an Airman must provide evidence to show they are experiencing an extreme personal hardship not common to contemporaries or that approval is in the best interest of the Air Force. As such, requests for SKB HYT don't meet these criteria.

**Q28: Can I receive a copy of my DD214 early?**

**A28:** As outlined in AFI 36-3202, *Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty*, paragraph 5.1.3, DD214's are not final and effective until you separate or retire. As such, the documents are generated and available for download at midnight on your DOS. You should obtain an USERID and password through the AFPC Help Desk to download your DD214. Additionally, if you need assistance completing or reviewing the DD214 worksheet, you should contact the Total Force Service Center at 1-800-525-0102.

**Q29: If a member is on PTDY for relocation after the SKB training is completed, but before terminal leave begins, what are his/her entitlements? Are they calculated based on the SKB location or the assigned duty station?**

**A29:** Entitlements are normally based on the member's assigned duty location. If the assigned duty station is OCONUS and the member chooses to out-process the assigned duty location before starting their SKB PTDY, Permissive and Terminal leaves (concurrently/consecutively), then the OCONUS entitlements will stop and the member will receive BAH for the location on their terminal leave form until their DOS/DOR, IAW JTR 100911.D.2.c. If an OCONUS member does not out-process the assigned duty location before starting the SKB PTDY, and he/she chooses to return to the assigned duty location after the SKB PTDY to out-process, then he/she will continue to receive OCONUS entitlements during the SKB PTDY until out-processed. Then, upon departure for the Permissive Relocation and Terminal Leave, the member will receive BAH for the location on the terminal leave form. Contact your local Finance office and Military Personnel Section (MPS) for information about benefits while on PTDY.

**Q30: Can I use terminal leave in conjunction with SKB?**

**A30:** Yes. Terminal leave is authorized at the end of the training program, either in conjunction or concurrently with the SKB program. Members have different options to choose from in the planning for participating in SKB and using terminal leave. For example, the training dates may overlap with terminal leave or the training date end before terminal leave begins. The E&TC may recommend that the training program ends and then terminal leave begins. See next question for an example of when this would be beneficial.

**Q31: Why would I want my training date to end prior to starting my terminal leave?**

**A31:** During terminal leave, Service members are authorized to undergo hiring actions and, thus receive wages and benefits from employers, which they cannot receive while participating in SKB.

**Q32: Am I allowed to take ordinary leave during my SkillBridge program?**

**A32:** No. If members are on PTDY orders for over 30 days, ordinary leave must be taken before or after, but not during their SKB training program. IAW AFI 36-3003, paragraph 4.1.1.7. Ordinary Leave begins and ends in the local area. The local area is the place where the member lives and from which he or she commutes to the duty station.

**Q33: Can terminal leave be taken separately prior to the start of SkillBridge, similar to permissive relocation leave, ensuring that it does not exceed requirement to be within 180 days of DOS?**

**A33:** No. IAW AFI 36-3003, paragraph 4.1.5, Terminal Leave is chargeable leave taken in conjunction with retirement or separation from service. The member's last day of terminal leave coincides with the last day of active duty. MilPDS Duty Status Codes include: PTDY SkillBridge-24, PTDY Relocation-23, and Terminal Leave-10.

**Q34: My provider requires me to travel to different locations during my SkillBridge training. Am I allowed to do so? If so, do I need a separate AF Form 988 for each location?**

**A34:** Yes. Travel is authorized, but only if it is required of all interns. This request needs to be coordinated with your military supervisor and commander for accountability purposes.

**Q35: My SKB provider is in a different location than my assigned installation. Can I out-process prior to SKB participation or do I have to return to my home station?**

**A35:** Yes, it is possible to out-process prior to SKB participation. Depending on the length of the program, this requires additional coordination with your local MPS. Please note that IAW the SKB PSD Guide, paragraph 7.8.6.6., Airmen not in a concurrent/consecutive terminal leave status or with follow-on Permissive TDY for pre-separation or relocation activity will return from SKB. In addition, IAW AFI 36-3003, paragraph 2.5.5., if a member is on ordinary leave, the member is required to return 15 days prior to their DOS/DOR. As you out-process for SKB program, maintain your AD CAC ID. For retirees, apply for a DD Form 2 (Retired CAC), after completion of your SKB training program.

**Q36: When can I use my Permissive TDY for relocation?**

**A36:** IAW SKB PSD Guide paragraph 7.8.6.3. and AFI 36-3003 Table 4.5 rule 2, Permissive TDY for pre-separation or relocation activity may be approved before or after, but not during the SKB training dates and must be taken within 180 days of DOS.

**Q37: Why can't I use my leave and get 180 days in the program?**

**A37:** Per DoDI 1322.29, paragraph 2. Eligibility: Service member is expected to be discharged or released from active duty within 180 days of starting the training program. IAW PSD Guide paragraph 7.8.6.7. Permissive TDY for separation or retirement relocation activities, terminal leave, or CSP/SKB cannot exceed a total of 180 days and may not begin more than 180 days prior to separation or retirement.

**Q38: Is it true that since I will be on a PTDY outside the normal commuting distance for my training, that I can have my lodging paid for at that location?**

**A38:** Per the SKB PSD Guide, paragraph 7.8.5.1. Providers may offer non-pay benefits (i.e., housing, transportation, uniforms, tools) when they are provided to all other trainees regardless of military status.

**Q39: Can I work a 20-hour week SKB training program?**

**A39:** Yes; however, the member would have to return to the duty station or be on a leave status when the member is not participating in SKB training.

**Q40: Can I use my GI Bill funds for SkillBridge Training Programs?**

**A40:** Service members who are approved to participate in SKB programs and are eligible for GI Bill benefits will receive counsel from a qualified education counselor or the Veterans Affairs on the financial outcomes of electing to use these benefits while on active duty. For example, the number of months of Post 9-11 benefits that will be utilized, members forfeit Monthly Housing Allowance, based on the number of months of GI Bill benefits used during military service.

**Q41: What should happen if the SKB participant wants to quit the program early to get hired for a job, or no longer wishes to participate? What is the process and who needs to be involved?**

**A41:** The participant should first notify the E&TC and the staff will send an email (with a read receipt) to the member, the unit commander, and the provider POC to verify specifics of the scenario. The E&TC staff will add a counseling note to member's education record specifically stating that the member terminated SKB training with his/her commander's concurrence, and annotate if the member successfully completed the program with a job offer. If the member did not complete the program or receive a job offer, then annotate that the member understands that SKB is a one-time option and they will not be considered for another SKB program. The member is required to complete AFVEC Exit Survey. NOTE: Whether members are local or PTDY, once the SKB program is terminated, they must return to home station and duty location immediately.

**Q42: What if an Airman is selected for promotion or extends his/her enlistment during a SKB program?**

**A42:** The Airman must immediately terminate program and return to duty. IAW the SKB PSD Guide, paragraph 7.6.1, Airmen have no further eligibility for future SKB opportunities, as this program is offered to members one time only.

**Q43: Can members participate in SkillBridge programs with the DoD or Federal, state or local government agencies?**

**A43:** Yes, Service members may participate in SkillBridge programs with the DoD, Federal, State or local government agencies. Members must be aware that if there is a potential job opportunity at the conclusion of the SKB program. If the agency does not have "direct hiring authority," there is no guarantee of employment, because transitioning military members will be hired through the government's competitive hiring process. In addition, without a waiver, military retirees are prohibited from entering civil service with the DoD, if they are within 180 days following their official date of retirement. For more details: <https://www.afpc.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/1105235/180/>

**Q44: Can I complete SkillBridge trainings online or via telecommuting?**

**A44:** Currently, there are no approved online SKB training programs. In addition, telecommuting for a SKB Internship opportunity must be a unique situation with a proven training program. Applications to participate in an online or telework training program will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

**Q45: Can I complete SkillBridge training programs to learn how to start my own business?**

**A45:** No, this does not meet the intent of SKB, which exists to provide a high probability of post-service employment. The A&FRC has a TAP track for members that are pursuing this goal.

**Q46: While participating in SkillBridge, are members authorized continued use of their education benefits such as Tuition Assistance (TA), college-level testing, and AF COOL?**

**A46:** Yes, effective with the publication of AFI 36-XX7, Total Force Development, enlisted members can utilize their Military Tuition Assistance (TA) benefits towards their approved Academic Education Goal. Currently TA cannot be used for any SkillBridge training costs. College-level testing services are also available. AF COOL credentialing must be completed prior to DOS. Airmen requesting funding within 180 days of separation or retirement will be reimbursed after submitting proof of credential completion.

**Q47: Is the current SkillBridge guidance waiverable?**

**A47:** No, but for unique situations with strong justification, you can request an Exception To Policy waiver through your E&TC, who will send to your MAJCOM Functional Manager at AFPC for review and then forward to Air Staff for approval/disapproval.