

Proposal for Permanent Change of Station Mobile Application

Business Communication 3240 Summer 2023

Professor McCormick

August 3, 2023

MEMORANDUM

TO: [Commanding Officer's Name and Title]

FROM: Mary Kate Zimmerman

DATE: July 24, 2023

SUBJECT: Proposal for dedicated Military Mobile Application

Sir/Ma'am,

Attached is the proposal for a mobile application dedicated to military members and their families.

Because the military lifestyle involves the inevitable relocation of duty stations, the proposed app will provide a comprehensive platform that consolidates valuable information and resources.

The app's primary objective is to offer valuable insights into healthcare providers, base operations, school districts, crime rates, neighborhoods, and shopping options, with a focus on meeting the unique needs of military families. Ultimately, this will be a solid step in ensuring the readiness of military members, and the resilience of their families.

By consolidating relevant information within a single platform, the app will serve as a one-stop resource for military families, facilitating their integration into new communities and enhancing their overall well-being. This proposal project is a response to the pressing need for improved support and information dissemination to military families, who frequently encounter challenges during their relocations. This proposal also falls in line with the push by the Department of Defense to ensure military members and their families feel more connected to their surrounding communities. All of which leads to an improved quality of life for our members.

As a military spouse going on fourteen years of near constant upheavals, I have seen the need for streamlining the relocation process. My hope is, with your help, we can create an app that will ease the stress and uncertainty associated with moving, enhancing the overall well-being of military families.

Thank you for the opportunity to help make the unique challenges our military members and their families.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction:

The military lifestyle involves inevitable and frequent relocations, which can be particularly challenging for military families. Access to accurate and up-to-date information about their new communities/ duty stations is vital for their successful integration and well-being. The proposed application aims to bridge this gap by offering a comprehensive platform that consolidates valuable information and resources, providing military families with the insights they need to thrive in their new surroundings. This application aims to provide valuable community information related to healthcare providers, base operations, school districts, crime rates, neighborhoods, and shopping. By catering specifically to the unique needs and challenges faced by military families this application will allow everyone to be acclimated and mission ready at an expedited rate.

Statement of the Problem:

Access to accurate and up-to-date information about new communities/ duty stations is vital for successful integration and well-being. This lack of access hinders military members' abilities to make informed decisions about healthcare providers, schools for children, local safety concerns, and amenities available. Ultimately affecting the readiness of the military members, and our armed forces.

Summary of Results:

The proposed application of a military driven platform fills the need faced by military members and their families by providing timely and reliable information greatly alleviating the stress associated with moving to unfamiliar locations. The facilitation of smoother transitions will drastically decrease the amount of research each member will conduct because all pertinent information is gathered in one place, designed for their unique military needs via our user driven armed forces members.

Feasibility:

The proposed application is plausible due to advances in portable innovation and the accessibility of significant information. Consider these factors:

Development of Mobile Apps:

The process of creating mobile applications has become increasingly cost-effective and streamlined. There are a lot of software development agencies with the know how to make apps that are easy to use and have a lot of features. Further, while benefiting from this technical expertise and guarantee the app's efficient development and deployment by forming partnerships with such businesses.

Information Accessibility:

The app can be integrated with the necessary data, such as healthcare provider directories specifically for TRICARE beneficiaries, information about school districts, crime statistics, military installations and local business listings including attractions. Large amounts of these information sources are settled and routinely refreshed by different government organizations, instructive foundations, and local area associations.

Client Reception:

Military families are already accustomed to using mobile applications and technology for a variety of purposes. With an awareness campaign within the military community, the proposed application would have significant client reception, adding to its success and impact.

Audience:

The primary audience for this application would be the over 2 million military service members, spouses and dependent children as this app will provide tailored information and resources to meet their specific needs. Additionally, this app would also benefit military leadership and base operations due to the facilitated communications with users offering the ability to coordinate among multiple stakeholders.

Methodology:

This proposal involves a systematic approach to outline the need for an application dedicated to military families. By engaging with military families to conduct a needs assessment, this proposal will ensure that the app will address the specific needs and challenges of the military community. Next, research data gathered on the app's design and development will allow seamless collaboration with project teams and stakeholders. Finally, various channels for the deployment and promotion of the app will be identified to raise awareness among the military community.

Statistics and Justification:

Based on the 2022 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Report from Blue Star Families (BSF), who mission is to strengthen military families by building robust communities of support. Since 2009 their research and data has identified the greatest needs within the military family community and create programs and solutions that will empower military families to thrive. Seen below (Figure 1) are the results of the top military family issues our armed service members are facing. Nearly 40 percent of all surveyed spouses name Relocation/PCS issues as a top concern in their military lifestyle. BSF explains their survey found, "Many military families faced financial challenges in 2022, including rising costs associated with relocation and housing, food insecurity, difficulty accessing and affording childcare, and spouse unemployment rates that were four to six times the national average. While some of these challenges are not limited to the military community, the unique aspects of military life can amplify them, including frequent moves, time away for the service member, and service members' job demands." (2022, Comprehensive Report). BSF also found that 74% of active-duty families reported finding housing within \$200 of the service member's Basic Housing Allowance (BHA) allotment and was safe for their families was **"extremely difficult."** (2022, Pulse Check Report) Personal stories investigated repeatedly expressed themes of safety concerns in neighborhoods that they can afford to move into based on the service members BAH.

Topics of increased financial cost for military families also included access to military/ veteran affairs health care systems access with some surveyed members as high as 46 percent. More

than 1 in 10 National Guard families (16%) and Reserve families (16%) respondents with financial stress reported medical costs as one of their top three financial stressors. Less than one-half (44%) of military-connected family respondents with eligible adult children have a child enrolled in TRICARE Young Adult; the most common reason respondents with eligible adult children did not enroll was that costs were “too expensive.” Combined with the lack of up-to-date information on in-network healthcare services is costing service members on average \$600 per household dependent. Additionally, the BSF Lifestyle Survey found that, “Health care needs, perceived health care access and quality, and perceived network resources differ for working age and aging Veterans. A greater proportion of working-age Veteran respondents reported they would like to receive mental health care but were not currently receiving it (14%) compared to aging Veterans (3%). Among aging Veteran respondents who reported they use the VA to meet all their health care needs, 68% “agree” or “strongly agree” that their doctor or provider is knowledgeable of health needs faced by the military and Veteran populations compared with 51% of their peers who said they do not use the VA for all care. Working-age Veteran respondents showed a similar pattern with 64% of those who use the VA to meet all care needs agreed their doctor or provider is knowledgeable of health needs faced by the military and Veteran populations versus 42% of those who do not use the VA for all their health care needs.” (2022)

Finally, beyond these financial challenges, some active-duty family respondents reported their children are experiencing disruption in their education from lack of school districts that understand the unique nature of being a military dependent. Many have expressed that if they were better equipped during their PCS to their new duty station, they would have picked different locations to live based on reviews from other military families. By understanding the challenges faced by military members and their families we can provide additional support in our comprehensive platform aimed at our armed service members.

Figure 1:

Top Military Family Issues						
	Active-Duty Spouses (n=3,173)	Active-Duty Service Members (n=466)	Veteran Spouses (n=889)	Veterans (n=2,433)	National Guard Families (n=285)	Reserve Families (n=212)
Spouse employment	50%	33%	30%	12%	19%	26%
Time away from family	45%	42%	29%	32%	48%	42%
BAH/Off-base housing concerns	40%	38%	10%	8%	10%	16%
Military pay	40%	44%	25%	33%	38%	28%
Relocation/PCS issues	37%	34%	14%	14%	7%	15%
Impact of deployment on family	28%	22%	30%	29%	46%	40%
Concerns about transition from military to civilian life	20%	25%	33%	29%	20%	17%
Access to military/VA health care system(s)	19%	26%	46%	45%	31%	32%
Military benefits	12%	21%	27%	26%	24%	27%

<https://bluestarfam.org/research/mfls-survey-release-2023/>

Implementation of the App:

Funding:

To finance the development and maintenance of the app the following funding sources are proposed.

- Allocation from Base Budget: Dedicate a percentage of the base budget to the creation and maintenance of the app. This exemplifies the Command's commitment to assisting military families and ensuring their welfare.
- Partnerships with Organizations: Collaboration with like minded institutions such as Blue Star Families, The National Military Family Association, Operation Homefront, American Legion, Semper Fi Fund, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Wounded Warrior Project, and the American Red Cross.

- Partnerships with Local Organizations: Seeking partnerships with local base specific organizations with allow enhanced collaborations with site specific communities.
- Grants: Apply for grants for additional funding for supporting initiatives.

App Development:

Recommended steps for a cost-effective and successful app development process include the following.

- Vendor Selection: Thoroughly evaluate reputable software development companies with expertise in mobile app development. By choosing a vendor with experience in building user-friendly and feature rich applications, we can ensure the technology can be applied to the unique characteristics of the military community.
- User Centered Design and Input: Integration of focus groups of our specific audience will ensure we provide tailored information and resources to meet their specific needs. By conducting “usability tests” with military families we can gather insight and feedback on the functionality of the software as well as work out any bugs, errors, or performance issues.
- Data Integration: Mindfully ensure compliance with privacy and security regulation for each base branch.
- App Launch and Promotion: Relevant mobile platforms (iOS and Android). Military leadership and base operations promotion is due to facilitated communications with users, offering the ability to coordinate among multiple stake-holders base wide.

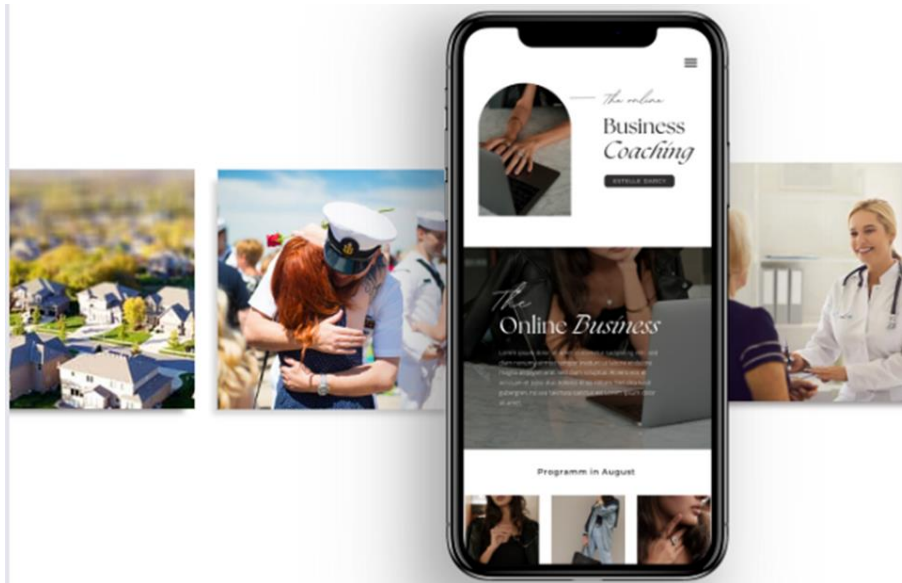
Test Bases:

Below are identified bases that would allow the app to have a realistic evaluation before full-scale deployment. This is important for several reasons; user feedback allows us to tailor features for different military installations and validate the impact of the app to our audience in a controlled manner and thus allowing us to understand the effectiveness before a wider

rollout. This also allots us valuable training and support time for base command and our users to work out any potential bugs missed in the development phase.

- Fort Bragg, North Carolina: Fort Bragg is one of the largest military installations in the US and hosts diverse branches of service in its community.
- Fort Hood, Texas: Fort Hood is known for having a near constant rate of frequent relocations which makes it ideal for testing the app during transitions and deployments.
- Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington: JBLM is host to many of the armed forces stationed on the west coast and offers a unique community of different branches.
- Naval Base San Diego, California: NBSD offers a maritime setting to assess the effectiveness with the Naval and Coast Guard branches of service.

Overview of App Features



Finding New Healthcare Providers:

- According to a recent study from the Military Family Advisory Network, approximately 40% of military families reported difficulties in finding new healthcare providers after relocating to a new duty station.

- Research from the Department of Defense (DoD) shows that military families relocate on average every two to three years, resulting in frequent changes of healthcare providers and healthcare systems.
- Testimony from spouses repeated the theme of spending hours each move searching for new dentists, pediatricians, women's health doctors, primary care doctors, ectara, and by the time they were satisfied with their care team they moved shortly after.

Navigating New School Districts:

- A study published in the Journal of Child and Family Studies revealed that military-connected children experience an average of six to nine school changes during their K-12 education due to relocations.
- The National Military Family Association reported that over 80% of military families found it challenging to navigate school districts and enroll their children in appropriate educational programs after moving.

Assessing Crime Rates and Safety Concerns:

- According to the 2019 BSF's Military Lifestyle Survey showed that over 60% of military families were concerned about crime rates and safety in their new communities.
- By providing community-based networking the app will reduce stress and alleviate the anxiety service members face during PCSing to new duty stations by relying on up-to-date information provided by users and local community government.

Identifying the Best Neighborhoods:

- A report by the National Association of Realtors indicated that approximately 50% of military families found it challenging to identify the best neighborhoods to reside in after relocating.
- The 2020 Military Family Advisory Network survey highlighted that over 60% of military families desired more information about neighborhoods and local amenities when considering housing options.

Shopping and Local Attractions:

- Feeling connected to one's local community correlates to greater life satisfaction for service members as it fosters a sense of belonging and social support in places that they are unfamiliar with.
- This app will support social networks that will ultimately lead to enhanced resilience and reduce the feeling of isolation service members are prone to at new duty stations.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Overall, this app has enormous potential to alleviate many of the problems mentioned in the Blue Star Families yearly survey by addressing the particular difficulties faced by military members and their families. The app equips military families with essential knowledge and tools by offering thorough community insights for healthcare providers, school districts, crime statistics, neighborhoods, shopping opportunities, and local attractions. The app promotes a sense of belonging and integration into new communities through a user-centered design and real-time updates, increasing life happiness for military families. The suggested implementation strategy guarantees that the app is properly tailored to satisfy the varied needs of military communities by adding test grounds for validation. Additionally, the app could improve the wellbeing of military families, which makes it a valuable resource.

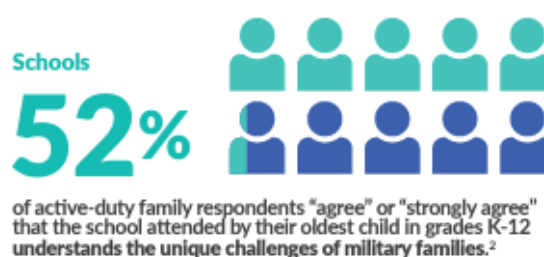
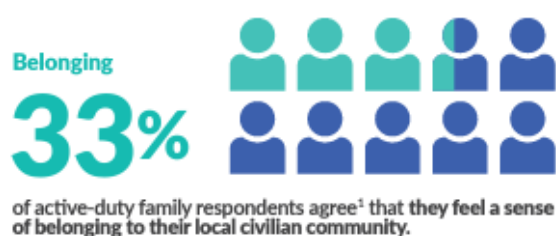
Next step recommendations are to secure funding through base budget allocations, grants, and strategic partnerships with institutions aligned with the apps mission objectives. Start evaluation of possible software development companies that specialize in User-Driven app designs that can incorporate relevant data integration from local government agencies.

Appendix

“When the 2017 Military Family Lifestyle Survey found that about half of all military families did not feel a sense of belonging to their local civilian community, it became clear that a purposeful model was required to fundamentally improve military families well-being at the local level.” Yet still, in 2022 we are facing the same disconnection to each new duty station. We don’t have to feel this way. We just need a platform to share our experiences.

[Bluestarfam.org/research/ccis-social-impact/](https://bluestarfam.org/research/ccis-social-impact/), O3E Airforce Spouse

Active-Duty Families and Their Civilian Communities



Resources

Most commonly used civilian resources:

Sports/recreation for children and/or family members

Health care

Social support resources

In your own words, what was your experience with obtaining permanent housing during your most recent relocation?

Top Codes and Definitions

Percent	Count	Code
36%	351	Difficult, dismal, nightmare, stressful
24%	231	Expensive
21%	214	Wait for military housing or private sector
19%	191	Over BAH
11%	105	Substandard housing
10%	99	Competitive housing market
9%	90	Staying in hotels/rentals
7%	72	Debt
7%	70	Inadequate space not enough bedrooms
7%	69	Challenges with pets

“It is impossible to stay within BAH, live in a safe neighborhood, afford utilities, have room for one child, and have a reasonable commute for the service member.”

Air Force Spouse, E-7

980 total responses

*3% of responses did not address the question and were removed

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