

CASE STUDY:
Solar Ready Vets Fellowship
Icarus RT, San Diego, CA



Solar Ready Vets

With strong leadership, organizational, teamwork and critical thinking skills, military service members and veterans are an excellent source of talent for the solar industry. The Solar Foundation leads two programs within the Department of Energy's [Solar Ready Vets Network](#) to advance a nationwide pipeline of military talent into technical and leadership roles across the American solar workforce.

A primary objective of Solar Ready Vets is to provide service members with high-quality solar training and employment opportunities. These programs create opportunities for solar employers to recruit and invest in military talent and develop a dynamic, resilient solar workforce..

The Solar Ready Vets Fellowship:

The US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes leads a highly successful Corporate Fellowship Program which provides qualified service members with valuable work-based learning experiences in high-demand sectors. Mid-senior level transitioning service members are placed with employers for 12 weeks of work-based learning in management and professional roles. On-the-job training is augmented by weekly classroom-based professional development sessions to facilitate a smooth transition from military service to a civilian career.

The Solar Ready Vets Fellowship extends the Hiring Our Heroes Corporate Fellowship Program to the solar industry.

Solar Host: Icarus RT



Icarus RT entered the solar+storage market in 2016, and has quickly gathered momentum with national recognition (such as the Shell GameChanger Accelerator Program) for innovative technologies in hybrid solar/PV thermal cogeneration systems. Icarus RT is led by a small group of engineers, where each team member wears several hats. As the company looks toward the future, they recognize the need to augment their existing technical talents in dimensions of business development, communications, operations and asset management. Icarus RT approached the Solar Ready Vets Fellowship as an opportunity to recruit top talent, with an objective of long-term hiring.



Through Hiring Our Heroes, Icarus RT reviewed 73 resumes of transitioning service members, narrowed down the candidate pool by education, military occupation, and specific skills, then interviewed eight potential fellows, with two successfully placed in systems and operations management roles.

While the majority of host companies for the summer cohort deferred participation given disruptions from the COVID-19 crisis, Icarus RT made necessary adjustments to allow fellows to start remotely, and through this process, immediately leveraged their logistical and organizational skills. Fellows were instrumental in establishing a robust, efficient remote work environment and helped strengthen internal systems and procedures.

Mark Anderson, President and CEO, reports that their experience through the Solar Ready Vets Fellowship has reinforced their desire to seek out and support military talent, and Icarus RT plans to incorporate veteran recruitment into long-term business development strategies.



Solar Ready Vets Fellow: Captain Kathrine Lukes, U.S. Marine Corps

Military Background: *Company Commander; Supply Officer*

Over seven years in the Marine Corps, Kathrine coordinated management of supplies worth over \$6 million (including procurement, receipt, accounting, repair, storage, issue, disposal, computation, and maintenance). She supervised collection, safeguarding, and transmittal of public funds, and participated in the budget process, administration, and expenditure of allotted funds exceeding \$1 million annually. She led the Headquarters and Service Company of over 400 Marines and Civilian Marines working together across the breadth of Camp Pendleton, California with diverse operations, and implemented innovative communications systems. While serving in the Marine Corps, Kathrine earned an MBA in supply chain and operations.

Role at Icarus RT: *Operations Manager*

Kathrine develops and implements organizational and project management systems for the company. She is also working with the engineering team on development of a prototype and proof of concept. Through this process, she has learned a great deal about solar technology, physics, and engineering. Icarus RT has invested in education to get the full team up to speed and to ensure cross-functional integration across engineering and business development dimensions of the organization as the company grows. Kathrine's knowledge of asset procurement and management, paired with critical thinking skills, allows her to identify innovative and cost effective solutions. The ability to work effectively among competing priorities makes her well positioned to establish robust systems, processes, and other key business infrastructure.

Outcomes & Next Steps: Kathrine has accepted a permanent position as Operations Manager with Icarus RT. As she completes her transition to the private sector, Kathrine plans to earn a project management certification. During her fellowship, she has enjoyed the challenge and the opportunity to gain knowledge and proficiency in new areas, and feels that the company leadership has invested in her professional development. She has found her fellowship at Icarus RT to be a rewarding experience that has given her much greater understanding of how to translate and leverage her military skills as she navigates her transition to the private sector.





Solar Ready Vets Fellow: Sergeant Roger Sanchez, U.S. Air Force

Military Background:

Electrical Environmental Technician; Aviation Maintenance Operations Controller

With six years of military experience inspecting, diagnosing, and analyzing aircraft fleet data, Roger is meticulously detail-oriented and able to quickly identify and effectively communicate problems and solutions to leadership. Highly motivated to bring safety and quality to the workplace, Roger is a motivated team player with supervisory and leadership experience. He learned about Hiring Our Heroes and Solar Ready Vets through the education center at McConnell Air Force Base, and recognized that as he was separating from service, this program presented a valuable opportunity to transition to a private sector career.

Role at Icarus RT: *Quality Systems Manager*

Roger develops and implements standard operating procedures for design review, supply management, and documentation management. He established protocols on procurement standards for the company's 2.5 kW prototype system, and communicates technical processes to guide installations as prototypes become commercially available. He analyzes procurement patterns for vendor acquisitions to decrease overhead expenses. As part of the Project Management team, he also develops, manages, and analyzes bill of materials for the prototype.

Outcomes & Next Steps: Roger recently completed an MBA, and has a general interest in renewable energy. Going forward, he seeks to leverage his military skills, business administration knowledge, and growing proficiency in solar technology to continue in a management role in the private sector.

**To learn more about the Solar Ready Vets Fellowship or to get involved, visit
www.AmericanSolarWorkforce.org/SolarReadyVets.**

The Solar Ready Vets Network is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office as part of an effort to prepare the solar industry for a digital future and modern grid, while increasing participation of veterans and other underrepresented communities in the solar workforce.

