

# Military Families and the Arts: An ArcGIS StoryMaps Collection to Discover Art Institutions Near Active-Duty Military Installations

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**Aubree Tillett**

**abstract:** Military Families and the Arts is an ArcGIS StoryMaps collection that serves military families by mapping art museums and arts centers located near active-duty military installations. The interactive maps are organized by military branch and browsable by an alphabetical list of active-duty military installations. The ArcGIS StoryMaps collection serves three primary functions: to assist military spouses pursuing a career in the arts with finding a comprehensive list of potential employers, to assist military dependents with finding arts-related opportunities to network into their current or new communities, and to assist military families with finding art-related activities near their military installation in the continental United States.

## Introduction

Military families move every two to four years on average, without control of where they will be relocated.<sup>1</sup> Constantly changing location directly impacts military spouses who pursue their own careers. Each move requires the spouse to research potential employers in their newly assigned and often unfamiliar location, establish a new network, and apply to jobs on a relatively short notice. Congress has developed programs to assist military spouses with finding employment opportunities, including Spouse Education and Career Opportunities, My Career Advance Account Scholarship Program, and the Military Spouse Employment Partnership.<sup>2</sup> However, the lists of employment opportunities are not comprehensive to all industries. While navigating their own career in the arts, the author noticed that there was not one comprehensive list of art institutions located near military installations in the continental United States for military spouses to browse. The author was specifically

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seeking employment opportunities as an art curator, art registrar, art preparator, art educator, or other business positions affiliated in arts nonprofits. After conducting their own research to discover potential employers in every possible location that they could be assigned, it became clear that a new tool was necessary to assist all military spouses with retaining their careers in the arts.

The author selected ArcGIS StoryMaps software to create the new tool. ArcGIS StoryMaps is a web-based platform, created by Esri, that allows for the storytelling or narration of a GIS-based map using multimedia and text.<sup>3</sup> A collection of ArcGIS StoryMaps allows for multiple StoryMaps to be grouped together under a shared theme. For this collection the theme was art institutions near active-duty military installations in the continental United States. By creating a collection of ArcGIS StoryMaps, each of the individual branch StoryMaps are linked together, creating the ability to browse different StoryMaps within the collection. An ArcGIS StoryMap was created for each of the military branches, allowing military families to focus on data relevant to their affiliated branch.

The Military Families and the Arts StoryMaps collection streamlines the process of discovering potential employers, calculating realistic commutes, and preserving lists of websites to monitor for job postings. For military spouses seeking employment in

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art museums or arts centers the map is a tool to discover art institutions near their assigned military installation. The buffer layer of each map provides an efficient means to understand the ease of commuting to and from each institution based on the location of

the military installation. By narrowing the scope of art institutions within commuting distance, military spouses have a list of potential employers near their area. To provide additional assistance, a profile box attached to each point on the map contains a direct link to the website of the institution where job postings are shared in addition to other opportunities to become involved in the art institution and network into the community through the arts.

Networking is important for military spouses and families to integrate into their new community. Participating in public programming, attending classes and events,

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and volunteering at art institutions of interest provides opportunities to meet staff, learn about the institution, meet new people outside of the military community, stay connected to the arts, and assist military spouses with avoiding gaps in their resumes.



Additionally, networking into a new community is important for military dependents during deployments. Participating in arts-related activities, such as routinely attending classes, lectures, or performances, are creative outlets that allow military dependents to stay distracted during challenging periods of time.

The ArcGIS StoryMap collection is also a tool to maximize the limited time available for family fun. In addition to providing a comprehensive list of nearby art institutions within commutable distance, profile boxes also identify whether the institution is participating in the Blue Star Museum program for the current year. The Blue Star Museum program provides free admission to military families from Armed Forces Day through Labor Day.<sup>4</sup> Finding affordable art-related fun for the entire family only requires a few clicks within the ArcGIS StoryMap.

By utilizing the Military Families and the Arts interactive maps, military spouses affiliated with all six branches of the military can efficiently search a comprehensive list of art museums and arts centers in states with active-duty military installations. The map specifically includes features to assist users with evaluating the commute and easily access each art institution's website for the most current information about hours, events, and opportunities for employment or networking in an arts community to maximize the time military families get to spend together.

### Literature Review

In the Blue Star Family 2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report, 35 percent of unemployed active-duty military spouses stated they need or want to be employed.<sup>5</sup> According to a Department of Defense Survey of active-duty military spouses in 2021, 21 percent of civilian spouses were unemployed and had spent an average of 19 weeks of the year searching for work.<sup>6</sup> Although 62 percent of military spouses were able to find work in their area of education, 38 percent of spouses are not working in their area of expertise despite 18 percent earning advanced degrees, 31 percent earning a bachelor's degree, and 13 percent earning an associate's degree.<sup>7</sup> Common sectors of work include private companies, at 51 percent; government agencies, at 27 percent; self-employment, at 12 percent; non-profit organizations, at 8 percent; and family businesses, at one percent.<sup>8</sup> Factors that impact military spouse career choices include frequent permanent change of station (PCS) without the ability to select their location. Twenty-two percent of the active-duty spouse respondents to the Blue Star Family 2020 Military Family Lifestyle Survey who need or want to work stated they are unemployed because they are recovering from a PCS move.<sup>9</sup> Active-duty military spouses are often moved to remote areas with few employment opportunities in their area of education.<sup>10</sup> The lack of employment opportunities in their field creates resume gaps, which hinders their ability to find work in the future. Fifty-one percent of active-duty military spouse respondents to the Blue Star Families 2020 survey agreed that their military affiliation prevented them from advancing in their career.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, military spouses' resumes feature jobs with short employment time spans in a variety of cities and states, which reinforces the trope that military spouses are not worth hiring because they will have to move again in the near future.<sup>12</sup> According to the Blue Star Families 2020 Survey, only 18 percent of active-duty military spouse respondents claimed they were able to

retain their jobs after a PCS.<sup>13</sup> Twenty-three percent of respondents stated that they had voluntarily lived apart from their significant other in the last five years, with 41 percent stating the civilian spouse's career as the reason for deciding to live apart.<sup>14</sup> Forty-two percent of active-duty military spouse respondents to the Blue Star Families 2020 survey stated the civilian spouse's career is an important factor when selecting preferences for new active-duty stations.<sup>15</sup>

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Each move requires the spouse to research potential employers in their new area, establish a new network, and apply to jobs. To assist spouses with finding employment, Congress initiated the Military Family Act of 1985, requiring "the Secretary of Defense to provide a preference in hiring for civilian positions above GS-7 in the Department of Defense to spouses of military members if they are among the best qualified for a position."<sup>16</sup> Military spouses are limited to using the military spouse preference once per PCS.<sup>17</sup> The military spouse preference "terminates when a spouse accepts or refuses a covered position, regardless of whether preference was applied."<sup>18</sup> In addition to a hiring preference for Department of Defense positions, the United States federal government also implemented a government-wide noncompetitive hiring authority allowing federal agencies "to make noncompetitive appointments of certain military spouses of members of the Armed Forces to civil service positions in the competitive service."<sup>19</sup> Eligible military spouses include "spouses who were relocating as a result of PCS, spouses of servicemembers who incurred a 100% disability because of servicemember's active-duty service, and the un-remarried widows or widowers of servicemembers who died while on active-duty."<sup>20</sup> In 2018, revisions were enacted on the noncompetitive hiring authority of military spouses in which the stipulation of relocating due to PCS orders were eliminated and replaced with "the spouse of a member of the armed forces on active-duty, the spouse of a 100% disabled member of the armed forces, or the spouse of a deceased member of the armed forces" for the next five years.<sup>21</sup> Military spouses have a two-year time frame to apply and use military spouse preference for noncompetitive appointments once per PCS orders.<sup>22</sup> However, not every military spouse is pursuing a career with the federal government.

In 2007, the Department of Defense established the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) program that includes sector-specific and situation-specific virtual career counseling services.<sup>23</sup> In addition to career advice, military spouses are encouraged to learn about career paths, education opportunities, possible occupations, build a resume and LinkedIn profile, and search for jobs based on title, keyword, or location.<sup>24</sup> The ability to filter job opportunities by telework and remote is useful, with 40 percent of military spouses working remotely.<sup>25</sup> The article "Turning Your Artwork Into a Career" advises military spouses to lean on national searches through Hiring Our Heroes hiring fairs and USAJobs or to become self-employed.<sup>26</sup> The majority of arts employment opportunities are private industry rather than governmental positions, reducing the helpfulness of USAJobs and federal spouse preferences.<sup>27</sup> The self-employment advice includes selling artwork online with social media promotion, creating a gala, exhibition, or art show with



promotion through fliers, locating galleries to sell artwork, and participating in craft fairs or farmers' markets.<sup>28</sup> However, there is not a link to a specific website to assist in locating local arts organizations or arts institutions. Similarly, the article encourages participation in professional associations, but a list of professional organizations is not included. Military

spouses find themselves forced to complete their own research to find arts institutions and organizations near their local military installations.

In 2007, the Department of Defense and the Department of Labor established the My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) Scholarship Program, providing up to \$4,000 in non-taxable scholarship funds for military spouses to obtain licensure or certification. With approximately 36 percent of military spouses working in fields where state licensure is required, according to 2017 data from the Department of Defense, Congress has begun providing incentives in FY2020 for the Department of Defense to enter a cooperative agreement with the Council of State Governments.<sup>29</sup> Portability of licensure is a recommendation by the National Conference of State Legislators, in addition to licensure fee waivers, expedited application review, and increased use of temporary or provisional licenses.<sup>30</sup> However, earning state licensure or additional educational certificates does not guarantee a job nor does it always assist military spouses with careers in the arts and arts nonprofits.

In 2009, the nonprofit organization Blue Star Families was founded by military spouses with the intention to connect military families with their community and organizations, conduct research about the challenges military spouses encounter, create career development programming, and establish networking opportunities.<sup>31</sup> Collaborating with the National Endowment of the Arts, Blue Star Families, and the Department of Defense, the Blue Star Museums program provides free admission for military families to the more than 2,000 participating museums, nature centers, and zoos between Armed Forces Day and Labor Day.<sup>32</sup> The program provides an opportunity for military families to make the most of limited time together. An interactive map on the Blue Star Families website allows military families to find Blue Star Museums by searching for a city or zip code. However, the map is not a comprehensive list of all art museums or arts centers in those states; it only displays participating institutions. Additionally, participation in the Blue Star Museum program does not equate to military spouse preference for employment at that institution. Blue Star Families launched a Military Spouse Employment Initiative to assist spouses in finding work at partnering companies; however, partnering companies are not necessarily art museums or similar arts nonprofits.

In 2011, the Department of Defense and the United States Chamber of Commerce partnered with private-sector employers to establish Military Spouse Employment Partnerships (MSEP), to "recruit, hire, promote, and retain military spouses" by posting job opportunities from the more than 600 partnering companies with direct links to their human resources employment website.<sup>33</sup> Partnering companies include corporate and nonprofit organizations. Military spouses can view partners by searching for an

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organization or browsing an industry sector, including “Arts and Design” as an option. When a simple search of “museum” was entered into the search for an organization box, no results were found. Art museums and arts centers are seemingly not participating in the MSEP program despite being institutions that are common places of work for civilians pursuing a career in the arts.

Arts initiatives for veterans and their families have primarily focused on art therapy rather than employment in the arts. For example, the National Endowment for the Arts partnered with the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veteran Affairs to establish the Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network, an initiative with the intention of improving the well-being and quality of life for military families.<sup>34</sup> Managing partners of the initiative also include the Americans in the Arts, Civic Arts, the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, and Mid-America Arts Alliance.<sup>35</sup> Services include clinical arts therapies and an increase of access to arts programming.<sup>36</sup> Virtual exhibits provide an opportunity for military families to display some of the artwork produced through the Creative Forces initiative. Similarly, the Americans for the Arts launched the National Initiative for Arts and Health Across the Military in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, and the VA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation.<sup>37</sup> The goal of the initiative is to promote the arts in the lives of military families through the lens of improving health and well-being. A directory of collaborating arts organizations and art institutions is organized by state. The directory provides direct access to the institution’s address, website, and telephone number in addition to a brief synopsis of programming specifically for military families; a label for the type of organization; a direct contact; and social media information. Although these initiatives are serving the military community, they are not intended to assist military spouses with finding employment in the arts.

Community-based arts organizations have also been established to connect military families to the arts. However, the focus for the arts organizations is connecting the military community to the arts for a therapeutic effect. For example, the Veteran’s Spouse Project is a nonprofit arts organization that provides opportunities for military spouses to participate in both in-person and virtual creative arts workshops. Activities include meditation sessions, art activities, journaling, and collaging.<sup>38</sup> These arts activities are a tool for recognizing, discussing, and accepting challenges encountered as a military spouse. Workshops are safe spaces to find community, build a network, and improve mental health rather than establishing a professional artistic career. Similarly, the Veterans Art Project is a San Diego based organization that offers veterans, active-duty service members, spouses, and dependents free classes in ceramics, glass, woodworking, and bronze casting in a safe space for the military community to connect and process their experiences through artmaking and art therapy.<sup>39</sup> The focus is on creating art rather than working in art institutions. Additionally, the United States Veterans’ Artists Alliance, founded by military veterans and artists, provides opportunities for veterans to find funding for artistic projects in theater, film, television, and the visual arts, participate in workshops, utilize studio space to work on artistic practices, and find support for artistic project proposals.<sup>40</sup> In this instance, the nonprofit connects veterans with the arts rather than military families. Although arts nonprofits that focus on creating art



and using artistic practices for mental health and well-being are beneficial, they are not resources to help advance careers affiliated with art museums or arts centers. Military Families and the Arts StoryMaps collection is a tool designed to display options of art institutions within commutable distance of every branch's military installations so that families can discover options for employment, networking, and family fun.

### Military Families and the Arts StoryMaps Scope

Constantly changing locations on short notice requires more tools that help active-duty military spouses to discover potential employers, networking opportunities, and paths to maximize family fun in new and unfamiliar locations. The types of art institutions featured on the map include art museums and arts centers.

Both types of art institutions typically have an educational foundation and often a non-profit status or are affiliated with a higher education institution. Careers in both types of art institutions are geared toward individuals

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with an education or interest in art history, art education, adjacent social sciences, and humanities disciplines, in addition to business professionals with an interest in working in arts nonprofits. Similarly, both types of institutions often include a variety of public programming, exhibits, performances, and volunteer opportunities to become involved in the local arts community. As a humanities and design librarian, it was of interest to the author to potentially include art libraries and archives; however, art museums often are the parent institutions to art libraries and archives. Since art museums were already included on the map it was unnecessary to separate the category; the art museum website would already include employment opportunities for all their departments, including the library and archive.

### Data Collection

Collecting the names of each branch's active-duty military installations was the initial step in the data collection process. Names of installations were mined from each branch's official website. A spreadsheet was the primary tool used to collect and organize data about the geographic location of all six United States military branches, including the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Air Force, and U.S. Space Force. Each military branch was assigned two designated tabs in the spreadsheet. The first tab included the address for the military installations; the second tab included the addresses of art institutions in states with active-duty military installations (See Table 1).

Locating art institutions required an environmental scan of online resources. Examples of websites browsed included city and state websites focused on tourism; magazines or blogs featuring a list of popular museums in different states or cities;







Each StoryMap includes a link to a Google Form. Viewers are invited to submit recommendations for art institutions in their local area that are not identified on the map.

To assist viewers with understanding which art institutions are included on the map without having to hover over every circle symbol in the map, a link to a PDF is also located below the map (See Figure 1). The PDF alphabetically displays the names of the art institutions included on the map by state. There is also a list organized alphabetically by art institution. As new information is gleaned from the Google Form, each StoryMap will be updated on a regular basis to ensure the most current and up-to-date information is provided for military families.

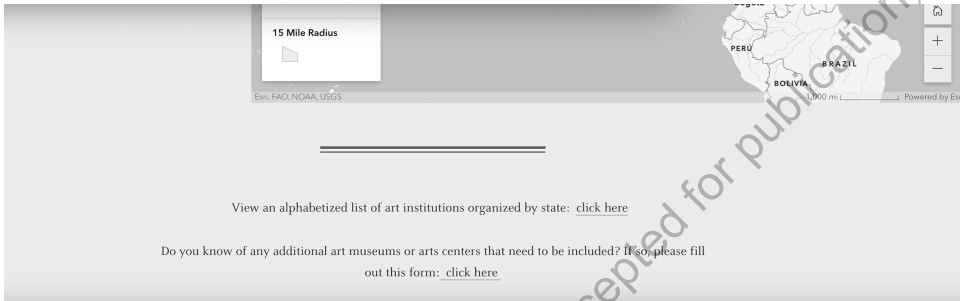


Figure 1. Each ArcGIS StoryMap includes a Google Form link, where users can submit recommendations for additions to the map.

### ArcGIS Online Maps Creation

ArcGIS Online is a geospatial platform created by Esri that provides the capability to construct a map by uploading data through a .csv spreadsheet. Selecting the basemap is the initial step in the map creation process. A basemap is the foundational layer to the StoryMap designed to provide contextual information about geographic locations on the map. The basemap titled “Human Geography Map” was selected for the Military Families and Arts collection because of its gray-scale coloration and minimalist aesthetic. Outlines of states and names of highly populated cities are visible when zoomed out; details that include building outlines become visible as the map is zoomed in. The basemap provides the necessary information for viewers to understand a general location on the map without visually competing for attention with the points added to the map.

Points on the map were inserted by creating layers. The first layer of data focused on military installations. The selected drawing style adds a location with a single symbol so there is one patriotic star on the map to represent each military installation. The color of the star differs among the six individual maps, as each branch has different color affiliations. For example, the star symbol that represents the U.S. Marine Corps installations are red whereas the U.S. Air Force star symbols are blue. To draw user focus to the stars, the size of the symbol was increased so that the stars are visible even when the map is zoomed out to a global view.

The second layer on the map focuses on art institutions. For all art institutions a circle symbol was selected with a visibility range of “countries,” rather than “world,” to avoid overwhelming viewers with the entire dataset of all layers from the initial global view of the map. When viewers open the map, they initially only see the active-duty military installation stars on the map. Art institutions appear once the map is zoomed in.

ArcGIS Online was able to decipher and differentiate between art museums and arts centers because the spreadsheet included a column that identified that information. Since the software was capable of differentiating the two types of art institutions, it generated art museums and arts centers as subcategories to the art institutions layers, which provided an opportunity to customize the circle symbols for each subcategory. Art museums were assigned a different color from arts centers, which is visible in the legend once the map zooms into the “countries” visibility range (See Figure 2).

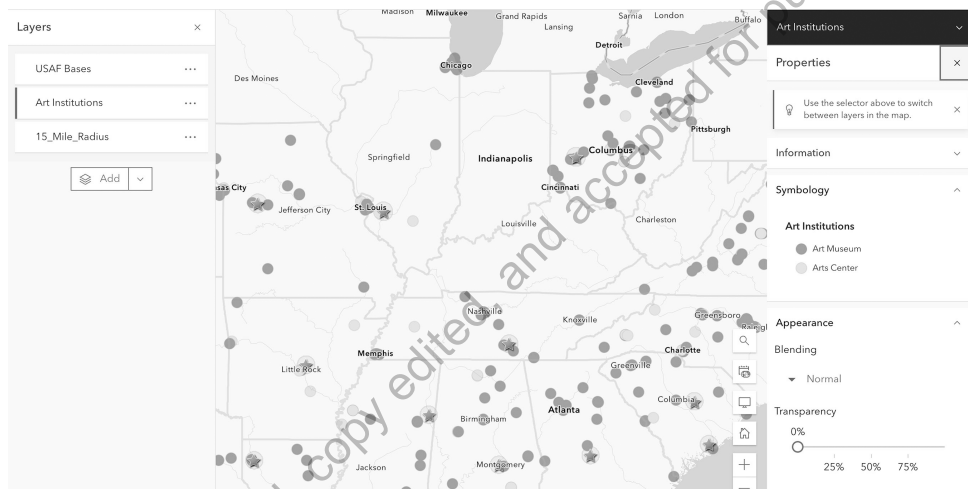


Figure 2. ArcGIS Online Map zoomed in to show the symbols used to represent art institutions.

Metadata included in the columns of the spreadsheet generates a pop-up profile box for each point inserted on the map. Profile boxes are accessible by hovering over any point on the map. For military installations, the profile boxes include the name of installation, city, state, and zip code. It was unnecessary to include a specific address for each installation, but rather a general location that military families will need to live near, and commute from to nearby art institutions. A specific street address is necessary for art institutions because they are only one building rather than a large perimeter of buildings with multiple entrances. The profile boxes for the art institutions include the name of the institution, street address, city, state, zip code, phone number, website, type of institution, and whether it is a Blue Star Museum for the current calendar year. The direct link to the website provides an efficient means for military families to stay informed

of current hours, events, programming, and opportunities to be involved at the different art institutions. Providing information for military discounts, such as noting whether a museum participates in the Blue Star Museum program, helps convey the affordability of visiting an art institution with the entire family.

The third and final layer in the maps is labeled “15 Mile Radius.” For each map, a buffer was created around each military installation point because that is where most military families will begin their commute to art institutions. The distance of the buffer is customizable and purposefully set to 15 miles, a reasonable distance in most locations for a regular commute to work or a single day trip with the family. The buffers created a circle around the military installations, customized to match the same color assigned to the star symbol.

### ArcGIS StoryMaps Creation

The map featured in each ArcGIS StoryMap is an ArcGIS Online map. For Military Families and the Arts StoryMap collection, the maps were zoomed out to a distance that ensured viewers could identify all fifty states where military installations could be in the United States. From this perspective, only military installations, represented by stars, are visible.

Focusing on only military installations when first viewing the StoryMaps was intentional as the first task is to identify where on the map the installation is located before browsing which art institutions are near the assigned military installation (See Figure 3).

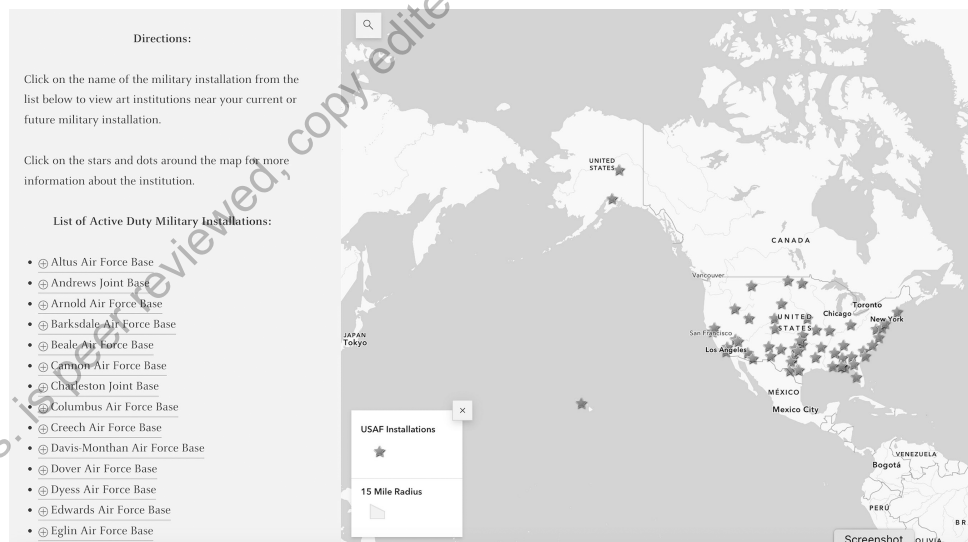


Figure 3. ArcGIS StoryMap aesthetic before viewer interaction. The stars indicate the locations of military installations.

Identifying an assigned military installation on the map is streamlined through the alphabetized list of active-duty military installation names located in the left panel sidebar.

When an installation name is clicked, the action link activates and zooms in on the map, centralizing the star symbol that represents the chosen installation. The increased degree of zoom allows the circle symbols to be visible in the surrounding area, in addition to city names in bold text on the map. Viewers are then able to focus on the location of relevant art institutions in relation to the military installation of interest without the distraction of an overabundance of points on the map (See Figure 4).



Figure 4. ArcGIS StoryMap aesthetic after viewer interaction. The stars indicate the locations of military installations, while the circles indicate art institutions.

Additional StoryMap details included a title and subtitle in the header section to summarize the intended audience and function of the map. Adding a design template altered the background colors, font, and text color, which retroactively changed the aesthetic of text on the StoryMap. The author chose templates that aligned with the colors affiliated with each military branch, similar to the assigned color for the star symbols on the maps. Finally, a stock photo was uploaded into the header section of the StoryMap to add visual appeal. Each ArcGIS StoryMap includes a different image of a military vehicle affiliated with their branch. A photo of a military vehicle was selected because it visually emphasizes the military personnel's career, which creates geographic limitations for military families to navigate around. It was important to locate stock photos that were both free and eligible to use based on the content license.



As a final step in the creation process a description and terms of use statement was added to each ArcGIS map and each ArcGIS StoryMap. This profile can either be viewed by users with an ArcGIS login browsing map project on the University of Minnesota campus or with a direct URL link to the StoryMaps. The author recommends saving the description text in another document to save time, as each revision of the maps required re-inserting the description.

### ArcGIS StoryMaps Collection

The six completed ArcGIS StoryMaps were transferred into a collection. The ArcGIS StoryMaps were organized in the collection from the oldest branch of service to the newest branch, based on each branch's official date of establishment. The ArcGIS StoryMaps collection is viewable by either browsing stories created by "my organization" on ArcGIS StoryMaps or by clicking on a URL for the collection. A URL for the collection was shared with a select group of military veterans and military spouses affiliated with varying branches and ranks for their feedback. This focus group consisted of relatives and friends to prevent the URL from being shared to the public during this initial assessment period. Five questions prompted the feedback:

- 1) Do the names of the installations and the information about the installations appear accurate?
- 2) Are circular buffers around the military installations visible?
- 3) Is the information on the ArcGIS StoryMaps organized so the map is intuitive to use?
- 4) What other types of art institutions would you like to be added to the StoryMap?
- 5) How would you revise the StoryMap?

Feedback about the information pertaining to the installation was a top priority. Every branch refers to their installations with unique terminology. For example, the U.S. Air Force refers to their installations as bases whereas the U.S. Army refers to their installations as forts. It was important to ensure that all the active-duty installations were not only present on the sidecar and map but also properly named. One of the respondents noticed the StoryMap did not include the revised names of the nine U.S. Army installations chosen by the Department of Defense to undergo official naming ceremonies by January 1, 2024, so this information was updated.

Inquiring whether buffers were visible to the viewers was a response to a challenge that occurred in the creation process. When an initial draft of the StoryMap was published, a pop-up window warned that the buffer layer could not be seen unless one logged into the software. Requiring a login for the software was not an option since the intended audience of the ArcGIS StoryMaps are the military community rather than students, staff, or faculty at an institution with login credentials. A first solution was to download and reupload the buffer layer into the ArcGIS content, so the system did not interrupt the data as an internal analytic tool. The issue was still not resolved. Upon further investigation it was noticed only a few buffers were visible throughout the various ArcGIS StoryMaps. This implied that the error occurred when applying the analytic tool to create the buffer layer. Ultimately, the solution was to delete and recreate

each buffer layer. Although the process was time-consuming, the buffers, which visually demonstrate commute times, did become visible to the test group.

Asking about the intuitiveness of using ArcGIS StoryMaps was a second priority. The test group was encouraged to report any difficulties or confusion that they encountered when navigating between the ArcGIS StoryMaps in the collection and on a specific StoryMap. For example, a discussion ensued about the organization of the active-duty installation list in the sidecar. Since the list is alphabetical, it was more useful to write the installation name prior to the branch name, except for the U.S. Army StoryMap, which maintained the term Fort before each installation name. Increasing the ability to quickly locate a specific installation from a long list was more important than writing an official name for the installation that often consisted of the branch name inserted before the installation name. The browsability must align with how the military community intuitively references their installations. After all, when the ArcGIS StoryMaps collection URL is disseminated to military nonprofits, university affiliated veteran-service organizations, and military spouse cohorts on social media, the viewers will be responsible for navigating the ArcGIS StoryMaps on their own.

The additional feedback prompts asked about possible additions and revisions to provide an understanding of the military community's interest in the current scope of the maps and evaluate the usefulness of only including art museums and arts centers. One respondent requested more performing arts institutions be added to the maps to broaden the scope to a larger spectrum of arts careers and arts-related events for the family to attend. Receiving feedback was a vital stage to ensure the ArcGIS StoryMaps had accurate information, were easy to use by the intended community, and determined beneficial by the military community.

Once revisions were complete, each ArcGIS Map Online and each ArcGIS StoryMap was published for public viewing (See [z.umn.edu/militaryartmap](http://z.umn.edu/militaryartmap)). The link was shared with non-profit military organizations and non-profit military spouse groups where the author is a member. In addition, the URL was posted to social media and shared with colleagues at the University of Minnesota. The ArcGIS StoryMaps collection is also linked on a webpage focused on the military community at the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota. Continual feedback from the public will be taken into consideration for further assessments and revisions.

### Replicability of the Maps

Military Families and the Arts StoryMaps collection demonstrates a model of mapping that visualizes the distance between two distinct landmarks. In this case study, the landmarks are military installations and art institutions. The military installations

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**Military families cannot select their installation; military spouses must establish their careers in the arts where the family is stationed.**

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serve as anchor points that determine the accessibility or inaccessibility to the second landmark. Military families cannot select their installation; military spouses must establish their careers in the arts where the family is stationed. The second landmark is art institu-



tions. Discovering the ability to connect with arts institutions around the anchor point is a pragmatic function for contemporary and future use for military families interested in the arts community near their location.

Changing the community in which ArcGIS StoryMaps serve does not negate the model applied to creating the map. The locations or landmarks are variables in the map with interchangeable assignments based on the needs of the viewers. For example, some communities might be interested in visualizing the commutable distance of public transportation stations to evaluate areas to live in. ArcGIS StoryMaps function as a tool for viewers to efficiently evaluate a relative distance from an anchor point to a second landmark, among other uses. The distance between the locations is illustrated by a buffer layer, which is customizable. By understanding the strategy applied to the map creation, the model demonstrated in the Military Families and the Arts StoryMaps collection is replicable for other scenarios.

### Future Directions

An additional second map will be developed to assist military families in the Reserves and National Guard find art institutions near their military installations. Military families in the Reserves and National Guard uniquely control their geographic location. For some families in these sectors of the military, the service members commute to a different state for assigned training weekends, while others choose to live near the installation. Although the family decides where they live, it is common for service members in the Reserves to relocate for better opportunities. Potential new locations rely on availability of positions for that servicemember's specific branch, career field, and rank. If a spouse is interested in pursuing a career in the arts or dependents are interested in participating in the arts community to network or have family fun, then the Military Families and the Arts can be a tool to assist military families with deciding where to relocate.

### Conclusion

The Military Families and the Arts StoryMaps collection emerged from the author's personal experience navigating a career in the arts as a military spouse. To balance the military lifestyle with a career in the arts, a need developed for a comprehensive map of potential employers near all military installations. Creating this mapping model assisted with developing a strategy for maintaining consistent professional experience with each relocation. For other military spouses with similar career aspirations, the Military Families and the Arts StoryMaps collection is a useful tool to understand employment opportunities, networking possibilities, and arts-related family opportunities anywhere the military assigns their home.

*Aubree Tillett is the humanities and design librarian at the University of Minnesota Libraries. She can be reached at [atillet@umn.edu](mailto:atillet@umn.edu).*



## Notes

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