

Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development

FY 2014 – FY 2015 Combined Report

This page intentionally left blank.



U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20416

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

August 2, 2016

The President
White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are pleased to present the fourth annual report of the Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development (Task Force). The Task Force is chaired by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and is comprised of representatives from Department of Defense, Department of Labor, Department of the Treasury, Department of Veterans Affairs, General Services Administration, Office of Management and Budget, The American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, Military Officers Association of America, and the Naval Postgraduate School.

In 2011, we issued our first report with 18 recommendations to strengthen the federal government's role in supporting veterans and their spouses who have an interest in becoming entrepreneurs. The enclosed report details the significant progress made to implement those recommendations and increase opportunities for our nation's veterans and their families. Since FY 2014, our team has been committed to progress. With the confirmation of Deputy Administrator Douglas J. Kramer in 2015, our commitment was renewed as he began work in his role as Chairman of the Task Force.

In FY 2015, 15 Veterans Business Outreach Centers received grant funding to train and counsel more than 46,000 veterans and their families. Additionally, SBA celebrated the official nationwide launch of Boots to Business Reboot – an extension of Boots to Business – to veterans of all eras, service members (including members of the National Guard and Reserves), and their spouses. Over 800 veterans and spouses were trained through the Boots to Business Reboot program in FY 2015.

With a strong commitment to government contracting opportunities, federal agencies once again surpassed the 3% service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSB) procurement goal by awarding 3.68%, or \$13.49 billion, of the entire federal procurement spend to SDVOSBs in FY 2014.

In FY 2015, SBA lending partners utilized the SBA's 7(a) program to make 3,354 loans, totaling \$1.4 billion to veteran-owned businesses - an 80% increase over FY 2014. SBA made key policy changes to drive this growth. SBA Veterans Advantage was effective and instrumental for the second year in a row, with the elimination of the upfront borrower fee for eligible veterans and military spouses for SBA Express loans up to \$350,000. Additionally, the fee for 7(a) loans between \$150,001 and \$5 million was reduced by half.

The President
Page 2

Interagency collaboration on veteran entrepreneurship increased significantly throughout FY 2015. Task Force members expanded their engagement strategy and worked together to highlight veteran entrepreneurship events, training opportunities, and counseling through outreach campaigns, social media, and website information.

Thank you for your continued commitment to helping America's veterans and their families succeed. With your support, we have been able to help veterans and their spouses start and grow businesses and employ millions of people across our country.

Warmest regards,



Maria Contreras-Sweet

cc: The Honorable Ash Carter
U.S. Department of Defense

The Honorable Thomas Perez
U.S. Department of Labor

The Honorable Jacob L. Lew
U.S. Department of Treasury

The Honorable Robert A. McDonald
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Ms. Denise Turner Roth, Administrator
U.S. General Services Administration

Mr. Shaun Donovan, Director
Office of Management and Budget

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	7
Summary of 2011 IATF Report’s 18 Recommendations	10
Recent Highlights	12
RECOMMENDATION #1: Leverage new and existing lending commitments as vehicles to increase access to capital for veteran and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses.....	14
RECOMMENDATION #2: Increase contracting opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses through the SBA’s Office of Surety Guarantees.....	15
RECOMMENDATION #3: Increase awareness, access, and utilization of microloans in the veteran-owned small business community.....	16
RECOMMENDATION #4: Develop government-wide tools and information to support buying activities based on market research sources, industry statistics, supplier base requirements, and success stories.	18
RECOMMENDATION #5: Maximize the impact of recent funding to increase small business lending by strengthening coordination between the Department of the Treasury and SBA District Offices.....	21
RECOMMENDATION #6: Increase and augment entrepreneurship and technical assistance programs offered to veterans.....	23
RECOMMENDATION #7: Improve information to existing service members and their spouses by revising the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to include information on entrepreneurship and business ownership resources.....	29
RECOMMENDATION #8: Ease navigation and create, or leverage an existing web portal that allows veterans to access entrepreneurship resources from across the government.....	31
RECOMMENDATION #9: Find and reduce barriers that impede service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses from contracting with the U.S. Government.....	33
RECOMMENDATION #10: Reduce regulatory burdens by offering comment to agencies as they conduct their regulatory look back analysis under E.O. 13563, “Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review.” .	34
RECOMMENDATION #12: Produce an agency-led assessment of veteran-owned small business achievements and contracting goals to increase veteran-owned small business utilization in prime contracting.....	40
RECOMMENDATION #13: Increase collaboration on federal contracting opportunities between national veterans’ advocacy groups and SBA’s Office of Veterans Business Development.....	41
RECOMMENDATION #14: Develop a streamlined, efficient, and clear certification process to be used by veterans and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses in federal procurement.....	43
RECOMMENDATION #15: Vest the GI Bill benefits as a property right, allowing veterans to use funds both for education and for small business creation activities such as counseling and business financing.	46
RECOMMENDATION #16: Research and direct policy efforts around current veteran macroeconomic issues by conducting a more in-depth analysis of veteran unemployment, employment, and self-employment.....	47
RECOMMENDATION #17: Explore revisions to unemployment compensation for ex-service members (UCX) to support small business creation.....	53

RECOMMENDATION #18: Examine the establishment of a new small business procurement initiative for firms whose total workforce is comprised of at least 35% or more veterans..... 54

Appendix 1 - Glossary for Acronyms..... 57

Appendix 2 - Task Force Members..... 59

Appendix 3 - Executive Order 60

Appendix A - BLS Products with Characteristics of Veterans..... 62

Appendix A (continued) - BLS Products with Characteristics of Veterans 63

Appendix A (continued) - BLS Products with Characteristics of Veterans 64

Executive Summary

INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON VETERANS SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

“We’re in the midst of a new wave of American veterans.... Our veterans are some of the most talented, driven, capable people on Earth.... Our veterans are already making America great every single day.... Every sector, every industry, every community can benefit from the incredible talents of our veterans. They’re ready to serve, and they’ll make you proud.”

-President Barack Obama, November 11, 2015

America’s 28 million small businesses are the engine of job creation and economic growth in this country, creating nearly two out of every three net new jobs in the United States and employing nearly half of the nation’s workforce.¹

Today, America is at a crucial moment in ensuring that these businesses have all the tools they need to do what they do best – create jobs. The federal government’s role in supporting veterans who are or who want to become business owners has never been more important. The Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development believes this for two reasons.

First, over two million service men and women who have served in Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and New Dawn and have returned home as veterans, many after having served multiple tours of duty; and with current projections of force reductions, the volume of separating service members may reach about 200,000 per year for the next five years.² Providing this growing number of veterans with the tools to transition back to civilian life – including assistance to start and grow a small business – is a moral responsibility. It must be coordinated and robust.

Second, as the U.S. economy continues to strengthen, the federal government’s efforts to help small businesses – responsible for two out of three of new jobs created each year – must remain strong. Many returning veterans have both the skills and the motivation to continue serving their country by building a business and creating jobs for themselves, their neighbors, and other veterans.

In sum, America has both an unquestioned responsibility and a compelling incentive to empower veterans through entrepreneurship, enabling them to become successful small business owners. This Task Force strongly believes that serving veterans who are – or who

¹ U.S. Small Business Administration FY 2017 Congressional Budget Justification and FY 2015 Annual Performance Report. Retrieved September 19, 2016, from: https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/FY17-CBJ_FY15-APR.pdf

² A White Paper: Enabling Collaborative Support to Reintegrate the Military Family. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman’s Office of Reintegration: *Veterans / Families / Communities*. November 2014. Retrieved June 1, 2016. from: http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/CORE/141103_Enabling_Collaborative_Support.pdf

want to become – small business owners is crucial to America’s overall job creation, economic growth, and competitiveness in the world economy.

Already, veterans own about 2.5 million businesses, or 9.1% of all of America’s businesses. These businesses generate about \$1.1 trillion in receipts and employ more than 5 million Americans. Notably, 442,485 of these businesses have paid employees. When including businesses in which veterans are at least half-owners, these numbers rise to 3.1 million businesses (11.2% of U.S. businesses), \$1.4 trillion in receipts, and 6.7 million employees.³

In April 2010, to ensure his commitment to the support of strengthening veteran-owned small businesses is reflected across government, President Obama directed the SBA to chair the Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development. The Task Force was charged with coordinating efforts to improve opportunities and access for small businesses owned by veterans and service-disabled veterans in areas such as capital, federal contracting, counseling, and other business development tools and services.

The Task Force, which comprises seven federal agencies and four individuals representing veterans’ service organizations, focuses its recommendations on increasing the number of veteran-owned small businesses as well as increasing the number of Americans those businesses employ.

Each fiscal year, the Task Force conducts four public meetings where members report their respective agencies’ progress and discuss future opportunities for collaboration on veteran entrepreneurship.

The Recommendations Four Years Later

The President ordered the Task Force to produce a report annually on its progress and proposals. The focus of this year’s report is to provide updates on the 18 recommendations that were made in the FY 2011 report. The recommendations are organized around three priority areas for engaging the federal government:

- ❖ **Increase Opportunities for Growth.** Increasing the flow of both capital and federal contracting opportunities to veteran-owned small businesses will provide veterans with more opportunities to build a new business, expand an existing business, and hire workers. In many cases, this does not require standing up new programs, but instead involves ensuring that existing programs and resources are more effective in supporting veteran entrepreneurship.

³ U.S. Census Fact Finder Table Statistics for All U.S. Firms by Industry, Veteran Status, and Gender for the U.S., States, Metro Areas, Counties, and Places: 2012. 2012 Survey of Business Owners, Table: SB1200CSA02. Retrieved December 15, 2015, from: http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=SBO_2012_00CSA02&prodType=table.

- ❖ **Improve and Expand Counseling and Training Services.** Self-employment and small business ownership are increasingly viable options for returning and discharging veterans, Reserve component members and their families. Providing tailored counseling and training services for veteran entrepreneurs and small business owners, and scaling successful programs as needed to meet the increasing number of veterans who are returning, will provide veterans greater prospects for success.
- ❖ **Reduce Barriers to Growth and Improve Coordination and Efficiencies.** By improving collaboration, integration, and focus across federal agencies, key programs (e.g., Transition Assistance Program), Veterans Service Organizations, states, and academia, the federal government can more effectively serve existing and prospective small business owners who are veterans. Expanding best practices in veterans' small business development is crucial to replicate success in government-wide efforts that will strengthen the success of veteran-owned small businesses.

As the Task Force moves forward, it will continue engaging with the veteran community and federal partners, and continue encouraging progress on its recommended actions. As needed, the Task Force will refine its proposals as it evaluates progress toward goals, identifies further challenges, and moves forward with its recommendations.

Summary of 2011 Task Force Report's 18 Recommendations

Increase opportunities for growth:

- **Recommendation 1:** Leverage new and existing lending commitments as a vehicle to increase access to capital for veteran and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses.
- **Recommendation 2:** Increase contracting opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses through the SBA's Office of Surety Guarantees.
- **Recommendation 3:** Increase awareness, access, and utilization of microloans in the veteran-owned small business community.
- **Recommendation 4:** Develop government-wide tools and information to support buying activities based on market research sources, industry statistics, supplier base requirements, and success stories.
- **Recommendation 5:** Maximize the impact of recent funding to increase small business lending by strengthening coordination between the Department of the Treasury and SBA District Offices.

Improve and expand counseling and training:

- **Recommendation 6:** Increase and augment entrepreneurship and technical assistance programs offered to veterans.
- **Recommendation 7:** Improve information to exiting service members and their spouses by revising the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to include information on entrepreneurship and business ownership resources.
- **Recommendation 8:** Ease navigation and create or leverage an existing web portal that allows veterans to access entrepreneurship resources from across the government.

Reduce barriers to growth while improving coordination and efficiencies:

- **Recommendation 9:** Find and reduce barriers that impede service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses from contracting with the U.S. government.
- **Recommendation 10:** Reduce regulatory burdens by offering comment to agencies as they conduct their regulatory look back analysis under E.O. 13563 "Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review."
- **Recommendation 11:** Coordinate and centralize information on veteran and service-disabled veteran-owned small business contracting opportunities across the federal government.
- **Recommendation 12:** Produce an agency-led assessment of veteran-owned small business achievements and contracting goals to increase veteran-owned small business utilization in prime contracting.

- **Recommendation 13:** Increase collaboration on federal contracting opportunities between national veterans' advocacy groups and SBA's Office of Veterans Business Development.
- **Recommendation 14:** Develop a streamlined, efficient, and clear certification process to be used by veterans and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses in federal procurement.

Other priority recommendations:

- **Recommendation 15:** Vest the GI Bill benefits as a property right, allowing veterans to use funds both for education and small business creation activities such as counseling and business financing.
- **Recommendation 16:** Research and direct policy efforts around current veteran macroeconomic issues by conducting a more in-depth analysis of veteran unemployment, employment, and self-employment.
- **Recommendation 17:** Explore revision to unemployment compensation for ex-service members to support small business creation.
- **Recommendation 18:** Examine the establishment of a new small business procurement initiative for firms whose total workforce is comprised of at least 35% veterans.

Recent Highlights

- ❖ **Access to Capital.** In FY 2015, lenders utilized the SBA's 7(a) loan program to make 3,354 loans, totaling over \$1.38 billion to veteran-owned businesses – an 80% increase over 2014. SBA also made it easier to connect with lenders through LINC. <https://www.sba.gov/tools/linc>.
- ✓ **SBA Veterans Advantage** was effective and instrumental for the second year in a row, eliminating the upfront borrower fee for eligible veterans and military spouses for SBA Express loans up to \$350,000. Additionally, the fee for 7(a) loans between \$150,001 and \$5 million was reduced by half.
- ✓ **Microloans.** In FY 2015, SBA-supported microloans provided \$2.6 million in capital to veteran-owned businesses. This represents an 18% increase over microloan funds delivered to recipients who identified themselves as veterans in FY 2014.

- ❖ **Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Contracting.** The Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business Concern Procurement Program allows federal agencies to set acquisitions aside for exclusive competition among service-disabled veteran-owned small business (SDVOSB) concerns. Federal agencies once again surpassed the 3% SDVOSB procurement goal by awarding 3.68%, or \$13.49 billion, of the entire federal procurement spend to SDVOSB in FY 2014.

- ✓ **VA Exceeds Contracting Goals.** In FY 2014, the VA exceeded its contracting goals for SDVOSBs and VOSBs, awarding 18.71% of its total procurements to SDVOSBs and 20.95% to VOSBs.

- ✓ **VA Reduces Certification Times.** In FY 2015, the VA made significant progress toward reducing the average time to verify a business as a VOSB or SDVOSB. While the processing time for initial applications became shorter and shorter from FY 2014 to FY 2015, the rate of initial approvals surged upward. In FY 2012 the VA Center for Veterans Enterprise (CVE) reported approximately 53% of initial applications were approved. However, by FY 2014-FY 2015, approximately 94% of initial applications were approved.

- ❖ **New Procurement Tools for Veterans and for Contracting Officers.** Government Contracting Classroom (SBA), Market Research Center of Excellence (MRCoE) platform (DoD), and Market Research Platform (VA) are working to connect veteran entrepreneurs and federal contracting officers with market research, training, and government contracting opportunities.

- ❖ **Supplier Connection.** Additionally, while the federal government is an enormous source of opportunity to small business contractors, SBA is working to support subcontracting relationships between large prime contractors and subcontracting small businesses. As such, SBA strives to keep small businesses, including veteran and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses, informed about resources which may help them. These resources include the IBM Foundation's Supplier Connection, a tool designed to make it easier for small businesses, including veteran-owned small businesses, to gain access to more than \$300 billion in combined supply chain spending by a consortium of 17 of America's largest corporations.

❖ **BusinessUSA.gov**. In January 2012, the Administration launched an online effort called BusinessUSA.gov to reduce the complexity of small business interactions with the federal government. BusinessUSA.gov is a one-stop, central online platform where all businesses, including veteran-owned businesses, can access information about available federal programs without having to spend additional time navigating the federal bureaucracy. BusinessUSA.gov adopts a “No Wrong Door” policy that uses technology to quickly connect businesses to the services and information relevant to them, regardless of which agency’s website, call center, or office they go to for help. The current version of BusinessUSA.gov has come a long way since its inception. With the help of feedback received from visitors to the site, new features and content have been added, namely [Made in Rural America Export and Investment Initiative Portal](#), [Microsites for States](#), [SBIR Certification Tool](#), [Training Portal](#), [FBO Open Opportunities](#) and more. BusinessUSA.gov has opened new channels of communication such as call centers, email, and social media.

❖ **Veterans Business Outreach Centers**. Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs) are designed to provide entrepreneurial development services such as business training, counseling and mentoring, and referrals for eligible veterans (including active duty, Reservists, National Guard, and military spouses) owning or considering starting a small business. In FY 2015, 15 VBOCs counseled 15,488 clients and participated in 1,165 training events with a total of 24,524 attendees. In May 2015, SBA’s Office of Veterans Business Development (OVBD) awarded 14 VBOC cooperative agreements located nationwide.

❖ **National Veterans Entrepreneurship Training Program**. In August 2011, the President announced a new interagency task force, the Veterans Employment Initiative, which was tasked with creating a “career-ready military” through a re-design of the military’s transition program. In July 2012, the President announced the result of the task force’s work, Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success), which was the first re-design of the military’s transition program in over 20 years. A core component of Transition GPS is an entrepreneurship training program for all separating service members. SBA, as a member of the Veterans Employment Initiative, and in coordination with DoD’s Transitions Assistance Program (TAP), developed and piloted Transition GPS’s entrepreneurship training program entitled, “Operation Boots to Business: from Service to Startup,” at Marine Corps, Navy, Army, and Air Force bases across the country. Boots to Business was fully launched in 2013 and has become a nationally recognized veteran entrepreneurial development program serving thousands of transitioning service members and their spouses each year.

✓ **Boots to Business (B2B)** – In FY 2015, over 12,000 service members and military spouses, participated in B2B on over 180 military installations worldwide. Since its launch in 2013 B2B has trained approximately 35,000 members and spouses and is continuing to grow.

✓ **Boots to Business: Reboot (B2B|R)** – During National Veteran Small Business Week in early November 2015, SBA celebrated the official nationwide launch of B2B|R – an extension of B2B – to veterans and military spouses of all eras. B2B|R is made possible through a public-private partnership with Syracuse University’s Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF), First Data, and the Marcus Foundation. Following an entrepreneurship summit at the White House in February, 2014 SBA and IVMF conducted a 14-city pilot in FY 2014 and

an additional pre-launch phase in the first half of FY 2015. Over 800 veterans and spouses were trained through the B2B|R program in 2015.

❖ **Entrepreneurial Development Programs for Service-Disabled Veterans** – In FY 2015, SBA supported three entrepreneurial training programs for service-disabled veterans via cooperative agreements with Syracuse University’s IVMF Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV), Oklahoma State University’s Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, and Fayetteville State University’s Entrepreneur Boot Camp for Veterans with Disabilities. More than 300 service-disabled veterans leveraged these programs for intensive entrepreneurship education over the past year.

❖ **Entrepreneurial Development Program for Veteran Women** – [Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship](#) (V-WISE) – In February 2015, the V-WISE training program for women veterans was recognized by Harvard University’s Innovations in Government Program “Bright Ideas” as a creative government initiative that deserves to be discussed and replicated. From May 2011 through August 2015, 13 V-WISE events have taken place across America, providing entrepreneurial training and networking to approximately 1,700 female veterans, service members, and their spouses. The successful program is instrumental in assisting one out of five female veteran alumnae in generating annual revenue exceeding \$100,000. Collectively to date, V-WISE alumnae have produced annual revenue exceeding \$41 million.

❖ **Federal Procurement Training for Veteran Business Owners** – [National Center for Veteran Institute for Procurement](#) (VIP) Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce Foundation – SBA awarded the first option year to VIP to provide accelerator-like training to 150 VOSB and SDVOSB in the federal procurement sector yearly. In FY 2015, the VIP program trained 140 veterans who are small business owners from 24 states, D.C., and Guam. VIP also reached an astonishing 500 participants trained, since the program started in 2009. Among these companies, 84% are Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business, 24% are Small Disadvantaged Business/8(a), 10% are Hub Zone, 45% are minority-owned, and 15% are woman-owned. The average VIP graduate increases business revenue by 51% the first year after completing the course.

RECOMMENDATION #1: Leverage new and existing lending commitments as vehicles to increase access to capital for veteran and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses.

The Administration’s commitment to empowering veteran entrepreneurs and small business owners with the capital they need to start and grow a business and create jobs is well established. In July 2015, the President signed into law the Veterans Entrepreneurship Act of 2015, Public Law 114-38, which permanently waives SBA Express Loan guarantee fees to veterans for loans up to \$350,000. The law also gives veterans a 50% loan fee reduction for SBA 7(a) loans between \$150,001 and \$5 million.

Lead Agency: SBA

Recommended Actions:

- Examine internal mechanisms to make the SBA Veterans Advantage loan product more advantageous to veterans and the agency’s lending partners. (Note: Patriot Express was terminated in December 2013.)
- Identify lenders currently using SBA Veterans Advantage product and advise them on ways to optimize program usage, disseminate best practices, and enroll more lenders.
- Conduct targeted outreach to credit unions affiliated with or near military bases to educate more lending institutions about the SBA Veterans Advantage loan product.
- Engage participating lenders in the underserved community lending commitment to encourage explicit commitments to veteran small business owners.

Progress:

In FY 2015, lenders utilized the SBA’s 7(a) loan program to make 3,354 loans, totaling over \$1.38 billion to veteran-owned businesses - an 80% increase over 2014. SBA also made it easier to connect with lenders through a new tool called LINC. <https://www.sba.gov/tools/linc>.

Next Steps:

SBA will sustain its policy to waive fees for veterans and their families qualifying for SBA Express guaranteed loans of \$350,000 and below and reduce fees by half for SBA 7(a) guaranteed loans between \$150,001 and \$5 million. This policy has saved veterans over 8.6 million in fees since January 1, 2014.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Increase contracting opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses through the SBA’s Office of Surety Guarantees.

A surety bond is a bilateral instrument in which a contractor pays a surety company to protect the project owner in the event that the contractor does not complete the contract. If a contractor defaults, the surety company will ensure that the project is completed. Surety bonds are important to veteran-owned small businesses that provide products and services to the federal government because contracts over \$100,000 require surety bonds. Most states and municipal governments have similar requirements.

The SBA’s Surety Bond Guarantee (SBG) Program guarantees surety bonds for small businesses that are otherwise unable to obtain bonds on reasonable terms. Currently, the SBA guarantees between 70% and 90% of bonds issued by participating surety companies for contracts up to \$6.5 million and up to \$10 million with a federal contracting officer’s certification. SBA’s Office of Surety Guarantees also continually reviews existing marketing efforts to inform and educate small business owners, including veterans, in order to provide more clarity on the steps necessary and the benefits of participating in the program.

Lead Agency: SBA

Recommended Actions:

- Increase the awareness and utilization of the SBA’s SBG Program in the veteran-owned small business community through the development and distribution of veteran-specific marketing tools.
- Distribute customized materials through SBA’s primary technical assistance partners and entrepreneurship education initiatives, including:
 - Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTACs)
 - Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs)
 - SCORE Centers
 - Women’s Business Centers (WBCs)
 - Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs)
 - Entrepreneurship Boot Camps for Veterans
 - Emerging Leaders Program
 - ScaleUP

Progress:

In FY 2015, SBA approved over 2,200 surety bonds for veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned firms. This represents a 10% increase over the previous fiscal year. Assistance to veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned firms has increased in the past several years. In FY 2012, it accounted for 10% of the total bonds guaranteed and in FY 2015 the percentage increased to 19%.

The number of agents actively participating in the SBG Program increased by approximately 4% in FY 2015. SBA will continue to strengthen existing surety relationships and increase the number of surety companies, agencies, and bond agents in the program to provide bonding for the maximum number of small businesses.

SBA has two marketing specialists who focus on marketing and outreach efforts to all segments of the small business base.

Next Steps:

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of FY 2016, Public Law 114-92, increased the maximum guarantee percentage in the Preferred Surety Bond Program from 70% to up to 90%. Effective November 25, 2015, this change will enhance bonding opportunities for more small businesses, including veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned firms.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Increase awareness, access, and utilization of microloans in the veteran-owned small business community.

SBA’s Microloan Intermediary Program makes funds available to non-profit intermediary lenders which, in turn, provide short-term, fixed-rate loans of up to \$50,000 to small businesses. The small businesses are also supported with management training and technical assistance. The average microloan is about \$14,000 and may be used for working capital as well as the purchase of supplies, furniture, machinery, or equipment.

The Task Force's research has found that SBA microloans have been less effective in reaching veterans than they have been in reaching many other underserved communities. While 9% of U.S. businesses are owned by veterans, only 4.3% of microloan recipients identified themselves as veterans in FY 2015. Therefore, the Task Force is committed to identifying opportunities to increase the number of microloans and microloan dollars going to veterans each year.

Lead Agency: SBA

Recommended Actions:

- Set a goal for SBA's Microloan Intermediary Program of increasing the percent of veterans served to 9% to mirror the prevalence of veteran-owned businesses overall.
- Educate existing SBA micro lenders about the benefits of lending to veterans and encourage SBA micro lenders to enhance their marketing efforts to veterans to increase the number of veterans they serve.
- Recruit additional veteran-focused service organizations to become certified as SBA microloan intermediaries.

Progress:

SBA's Office of Capital Access (OCA) continues to encourage stepped up marketing to veterans that are interested in becoming self-employed. Lending to veterans was discussed at the FY 2014 Microloan Program National Training Conference. SBA plans to offer additional information regarding the needs of veterans and the tools available to community-based lending entities in the 2016 conference. Intermediaries are encouraged to contact local military bases and market their lending and training programs to military members that have or are getting ready to out-process. Microlender contact information has been provided to the OCA's B2B Initiative for distribution to Business to Business trainers and participating trainees. OCA worked closely with SBA's Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships in improve recruitment of veteran-focused lending entities.

In FY 2015, SBA supported 160 microloans to veterans totaling \$2.6 million.

Next Steps:

Continue to encourage increased lending to veterans in need of small amounts of capital by:

- Increasing subject matter training for microloan program intermediaries
- Qualify intermediaries as B2B Initiative trainers
- Moving veterans from business trainees to business owners/borrowers

Continue to seek veteran-focuses lenders that have the capacity to operate a revolving loan fund.

Increase lending to veteran-owned small businesses with the goal of 9% representation in the borrower population by:

- Increasing dissemination of the goal to intermediary lenders

- Improving data responses in existing reporting systems

RECOMMENDATION #4: Develop government-wide tools and information to support buying activities based on market research sources, industry statistics, supplier base requirements, and success stories.

Currently, federal agencies do not collect information on veteran-owned small business outreach efforts by their respective Offices of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBUs). Collecting this information and sharing it among contracting officers and veterans alike will help better inform the veteran-owned small business community of what resources are available and how to properly use them.

Lead Agencies: DoD, GSA, SBA, and VA

Recommended Actions:

- Coordinate production of materials among SBA, the Federal Acquisition Institute, and/or the Defense Acquisition University (DAU). Disseminate materials throughout Department and Agency Offices of Small Business, PTACs, VBOCs, SBDCs, WBCs, SCORE, and Veterans Business Development Officers.

Progress:

In 2010, DoD launched the Better Buying Power (BBP) initiative to deliver needed warfighting capabilities within the constraints of a declining defense budget. The purpose of the BBP initiative is to improve the acquisition process and remove barriers to doing business with the government. On April 9, 2015, DoD released the latest installment of BBP to continue improvements in the acquisition process.

As part of the latest installment, DoD began developing the Market Research Center of Excellence (MRCoE) platform – a big data solution that simplifies the market research process. This tool collects and organizes information from DoD, commercial sources, and industry and uses the data to map twenty years’ of procurement data and forecasting data. Over time, the system will apply predictive analytics and trend analysis to identify at-risk areas within the small business industrial base. The tool will serve as an entry point into DoD for veteran-owned small businesses. The tool will enable government procurement personnel to identify veteran-owned businesses through more efficient market research.

The platform is also a collaborative tool. The DoD awards more than 500,000 contracts annually. All major defense acquisitions require market research justification reports – which assess the capacity of small businesses to meet requirements. The MRCoE system will not only automate major components in the generation of that report, but it will enable contracting officers and program managers to import the data from the system and produce the final document on the same site.

GSA continues to support the ability of federal agencies to gather procurement information by providing data as available from the Integrated Award Environment (IAE) databases to the requesting federal agencies. Vendor engagement through multiple Federal Acquisition Service (FAS) outreach teams is ongoing. GSA provides SBA feedback on veteran-related policy and regulations, and collaborates with other agencies by sponsoring and attending veteran conferences such as National Veterans Small Business Week (NVSBW), and National Veterans Small Business Engagement (NVSBE).

In partnership with the DoD, VA took steps to develop a Market Research Platform to centralize information on market trends and supplier capabilities. This market intelligence tool would allow government buyers to make more informed decisions when seeking out small businesses that meet the requirements of their respective organizations.

The following was accomplished between FY 2014 and FY 2015:

- Defined an Acquisition Strategy and Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) Platform Partnering Strategy;
- Partnered with the Office of Information & Technology (OIT) and Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDC) for the SOA Plan;
- Deployed Event Management Services (EMS) 2.0;
- Established DoD/VA Interagency Agreement (IAA) to develop—
 - Goals Management;
 - Market Intelligence; and
 - Acquisition Analytics.

The future vision for the Market Research Platform is to standardize a fully functional, efficient EMS for Federal-wide implementation.

VA also made some headway on employing an analytic EMS System (EMSS). EMSS supported registration and scheduling activities at the NVSBE. The system was designed to connect suppliers with decision makers from both federal and commercial entities. A mobile EMS application was also created as a portable solution and supplement to EMSS.

SBA provides free, online resources to help prospective and existing small business understand the basics about contracting with federal agencies through its Government Contracting Classroom, or www.sba.gov/gcclassroom. Courses for both small businesses and contracting officers are available.

The Small Business Procurement Advisory Council (SBPAC) meets monthly to discuss federal agency small business goaling achievement and to share updates on existing and new tools for OSDBUGs to consider as they work toward their small business utilization goals. Directors from federal small business program offices comprise the SBPAC.

In July 2015, DoD and SBA held a joint small business training program where SBA's Area Directors, (ADs) Procurement Center Representatives (PCRs), and senior staff from the Office of Government Contracting, Office of Policy and Research, and Office of Business Development, came together with senior staff from DoD's Office of Small Business Program (OSBP), including

key personnel from DoD's small business procurement offices nationwide, to share best practices in achieving small business utilization. The training week included break-out sessions, small business procurement regulatory and legislative updates, and provided a setting for an open and continuing dialogue on how DoD and SBA can best maximize their combined resources to achieve 23% of small business utilization in federal procurement. Small business utilization program offices that are actively engaged in seeking new opportunities for small businesses in the procurement process are more likely to achieve their respective small business achievement goals.

SBA continues to engage key stakeholders through the American Supplier Initiative (ASI) where key stakeholders in the public and private sectors as well as small businesses come together to ensure the development of economic ecosystems that support robust small business supply chains. From January to November 2015, SBA held 20 supply chain events, in collaboration with federal agencies and private companies, throughout the country.

SBA's OVBD works internally to ensure program offices are providing information by way of fulfillment on veterans programs (such as B2B). In FY 2015:

- OSBDC assisted the B2B team in updating all marketing materials and branding and provided over 2500 documents to SBA District offices.
- SBDCs participated in focus groups to update B2B course curriculum.

Next Steps:

DoD will release the MRCoE platform in three phases – with each phase building on additional functionalities:

- Release 1 will include a goals management system;
- Release 2 will include industry engagement tools, analytical tools for acquisition workforce, and market research report generation; and,
- Release 3 will include full transition of capability to strategic platform with analytics on utilization and a consolidated repository of historical market research activities and reports utilized to enhance future market research activity.

GSA will continue to support veteran small businesses by:

- Promoting the 21 Gun Salute and GSA's Veterans Small Business Forum and building nationwide volunteer support system for events, training, and other social engagements for the benefit of all veterans;
- Monitoring small business goal for SDVOSB goal achievement, engaging contracting staff for set-asides, sole source and other to the benefit of awarding to this small business category; and,
- Increasing small business events and networking opportunities for all small business categories specifically for veteran exhibiting to GSA's contracting staff.

SBA will continue to engage with its federal procurement partners in sharing best practices on achieving veteran-owned small business goal achievement. Instrumental in this effort will be SBA's ability to rely on internal support, especially in the development of procurement-related

curriculum i.e. Government Contracting Classroom at www.sba.gov/gcclassroom. Curriculum is reviewed annually and refreshed and once updates are finalized, will be presented via webinars to SBDCs and SBA resource partners.

In FY 2016, VA plans to leverage IT solutions that will enhance how the agency does business with small businesses, particularly VOSBs by deploying the following tools:

- Acquisition Analytics 1.0;
- Market Research 1.0/2.0/3.0;
- Goals Management 1.0/2.0/3.0;
- Acquisition Analytics 1.0/2.0/3.0; and,
- VIP Web Services.

VA will also update and improve EMSS to keep up with the changing and evolving demands of the veteran-owned small business community and procurement decision makers using the system.

RECOMMENDATION #5: Maximize the impact of recent funding to increase small business lending by strengthening coordination between the Department of the Treasury and SBA District Offices.

The Small Business Jobs Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-240) had two key provisions for the Treasury that were designed to increase small business lending, both of which identified veterans as an important target group. First, the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) was funded with \$1.5 billion to support state programs aimed at improving access to capital for job creators. Second, the Small Business Lending Fund (SBLF) invested in more than 300 banks and community development loan funds (CDLFs); providing low-cost capital that they, in turn, can use to increase lending to small businesses. These institutions submitted small business lending plans that included outreach and marketing to certain groups, including veterans.

Creating opportunities for coordination among Treasury, SBA District Offices, state-level agencies and SBLF participants will help Small Business Jobs Act funds be used effectively as a key source of financing for veteran-owned small businesses.

Lead Agencies: Treasury and SBA

Recommended Actions:

- Designate senior representatives at Treasury and SBA to ensure that SSBCI and SBLF are linked, leveraged, and aligned across national and state-level financing programs as well as SBA veteran training programs.
- Explore development of joint marketing materials to ensure that state-level agencies, community banks, and veteran small business owners are aware of SBA counseling resources and SBA and Treasury loan programs.

Progress:

SBLF encourages lending to small businesses by providing low cost capital to qualified community banks and CDLFs with assets of less than \$10 billion. The purpose of SBLF is to encourage Main Street banks and small businesses to work together, help create jobs, and promote economic growth in communities across the nation. Through SBLF, Treasury invested over \$4 billion in 332 institutions operating in over 3,000 locations across 48 states and five territories. As of September 30, 2015, SBLF participants had increased their small business lending by \$17.9 billion over a \$30 billion pre-program baseline.

In August 2015, SBLF released its Third Annual Lending Survey to better understand how SBLF participants were fulfilling their commitments to outreach and marketing to certain groups, including veterans. According to the survey, program participants reported total expenditures of approximately \$1.0 million on outreach and advertising activities targeting veterans for the year ended June 30, 2014.

SSBCI was funded with \$1.5 billion from the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010 to support state and local programs that provide lending to small businesses and small manufacturers that are creditworthy but are not getting the loans they need to expand and create jobs. SSBCI provides states significant flexibility to build on successful models for state small business programs, including collateral support programs, capital access programs (CAPs), loan participating programs, loan guarantee programs and state-run venture capital programs. SSBCI program rules also identify underserved communities, including veterans, as an important target group for small business lending. As of December 31, 2014, SSBCI funds have leveraged almost \$6.4 billion in new small business loans and investments.

To promote the importance of small business lending to veterans, Treasury and SBA worked together in 2015 to distribute information on SSBCI to SBA District and Regional Offices to raise awareness of opportunities to collaborate with SSBCI. Under the SSBCI Program, eligible state capital access programs may not enroll the unguaranteed portions of SBA-guaranteed loans without the express, prior written consent of the Treasury. However, there are still several opportunities for collaboration, such as where a borrower is SBA ineligible, to support 504 bridge financing; and, when a borrower is seeking two distinct loans for different purposes, one may be SBA-guaranteed and the other could be supported by SSBCI state funding allocations.

Independently, Treasury used the annual conference of SSBCI state program managers from May 11 to May 13, 2015 in Washington, DC to promote SSBCI's ability to provide capital to veteran-owned small business. In addition, while not required, some state programs track the use of SSBCI funds in loans to veteran-owned companies.

Next Steps:

Moving into FY 2016, Treasury will continue to raise awareness of SBLF and SSBCI among community lenders and veteran-business owners. SBA will continue to integrate information on SBLF and SSBCI into SBA outreach materials and distribute them to SBA District Offices and resource partners (SBDCs, WBCs, SCORE, VBOCs). SBA will also continue to distribute information on SBLF and SSBCI at lender outreach events to ensure SBA's network of

community banks are aware of other tools available to them to assist veteran-owned small businesses.

RECOMMENDATION #6: Increase and augment entrepreneurship and technical assistance programs offered to veterans.

SBA District Offices and resource partners, namely SBDC, WBCs, SCORE, and VBOCs, help entrepreneurs and small business owners start and grow businesses by providing free or low-cost training, counseling, coaching and mentoring to over one million clients a year. In FY 2015, SBA counseled and trained 48,346 veterans and veteran-owned small businesses.

Specifically, the SBDC program provides services to the veteran community nationwide through its network of over 900 locations; SCORE provides veterans, National Guard, Reservists and military families with support and mentorship; WBCs provide services to veterans at over 100 locations; VBOCs provide business training and counseling at the 15 VBOCs.⁴

Veterans use a wide variety of resources and services based upon their proven effectiveness, but sometimes encounter services that are fragmented or siloed. Stronger collaboration across various veteran-focused training and counseling networks is an important short-term concern. Although these and other federal resources provide needed counseling and training services to veterans, there is a need to create a standardized, national entrepreneurship training program specifically for veterans. Creating a national standardized veteran training program with an innovative, state-of-the-art entrepreneurship curriculum would bring greater cohesion and coordination. This training could utilize expert local instructors, including academics and successful small business owners, to provide training in skills used to create and grow entrepreneurial ventures and small businesses. A national program could provide engaging training modules and workshops dedicated to the basics of launching a business.

Ultimately, consideration should be given to develop veteran entrepreneurship program models that are designed to open the door and accelerate successful small business ownership for veterans, service members and their families who want to start or grow small businesses. Several veteran entrepreneurship programs do exist. A national program, based on these models, and available locally could reach a greater number of veterans, service members and their families.

Lead Agencies: DoD, DOL, SBA, and VA

Recommended Actions:

- Establish a national Veteran Entrepreneur Training program, possibly based on an expansion/revision to the best practices found in the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veteran with Disabilities (EBV) program. Eligibility could be expanded to all veterans,

⁴ At the end of FY 2015, a total of 15 VBOC grantees existed. At the time of publication of this report, the number of VBOCs expanded to 20 centers nationwide.

service members, and Reserve component members, as well as spouses, caregivers, and widows and widowers.

- Bring together the best public/private resources within a community based platform to help provide increased training opportunities for service men and women interested in entrepreneurship. Such an effort could be integrated into the President's recent announcement of a "reverse boot camp" that is more broadly focused on helping gain licenses and credentials that quickly translate their military skills into industry-related skills.
- Enhance coordination of SBA's veterans' counseling and training services through regional Veterans Advocacy Coordinator positions.

Progress:

DoD has a variety of programs focusing on providing technical assistance to small businesses that provide goods or services. These goods and services are critical to enhancing the capabilities of the defense industrial base and fulfilling key DoD needs. Veteran small business owners can take advantage of the assistance offered by DoD to position themselves to meet the contract requirements of the DoD market. Three small business resources in particular are available for veterans: 1) PTACs, 2) the Mentor Protégé Program (MPP), and 3) the Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer Programs (SBIR/STTR)

In 1985 Congress authorized DoD to implement the Procurement Technical Assistance Program as an initiative to expand the number of businesses capable of participating in the government marketplace. The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) administers the program which provides matching funds through cooperative agreements with state and local governments and non-profit organizations, for the establishment of PTACs to provide training and assistance to small businesses. Veteran business owners can receive free advice to help them interpret government solicitations, register on DoD vendor websites or find potential bidding partners.

In FY 2014, there were 98 PTACs – with over 300 local offices, forming a network of dedicated procurement professionals with a presence in all fifty states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico and Guam.

DoD's MPP began in 1990 during the First Gulf War and is the oldest federal mentor-protégé program in existence. The program offers tailored assistance to small disadvantaged businesses by helping them to expand their marketplace participation by focusing on specific developmental needs, such as in the areas of accounting, marketing, or security. Veteran business owners are excellent candidates to become a protégé and partner with a more established mentor firm.

In 2007, the Government Accountability Office concluded that most former protégé firms valued their experience in the program – with 93% of them reporting their participation enhanced their firm's overall capabilities, 87% of them reporting mentors helped with their business development, and 84% reporting mentor support helped their engineering or technical expertise.

DoD has also recently expanded its SBIR/STTR Programs. In FY 2014, the program awarded over \$1 billion through 3,000 research contracts. The goal of the program is to increase the utilization of small businesses in DoD's research and development process – supporting commercialization of technology identified as having dual-use (military-commercial) market potential. The program has three phases:

- The objective of Phase I is to establish the technical merit, feasibility, and commercial potential of the proposed research and development efforts and to determine the quality of performance of the small business awardee organization prior to providing further federal support.
- The objective of Phase II is to continue the research and development efforts based on the results achieved in Phase I and the scientific and technical merit and commercial potential of the project proposed in Phase II.
- The objective of Phase III, where appropriate, is to assist the small business to pursue commercialization objectives resulting from research and development activities.

Veteran business owners often have innovative solutions to challenges faced by DoD. The SBIR/STTR programs provide veterans with the opportunity to propose their solutions in response to stated DoD challenges. The programs provide the resources and structure to describe the solutions, develop them into working prototypes and then pursue commercialization opportunities within the DoD supply chain.

DOLs Veterans' Employment Training Service (VETS) conducts quarterly "Small Business Boot Camps" where a subject matter expert counsels small businesses including SDVOSBs and VOBs on how to market themselves to federal agencies. This is a 2-hour training session that provides extensive information on the federal procurement process, and how best to market small business capabilities to meet agency missions and SDVOSB targets.

Self-Employment Assistance (SEA) programs, authorized by federal law, in seven states offers dislocated workers the opportunity for early re-employment. Individuals who are determined most likely to exhaust benefits and in need of services may participate in the SEA program, including any individuals who are receiving unemployment compensation for ex-service members (UCX). The SEA program is designed to encourage and enable unemployed workers to create their own jobs by starting their own small businesses. Under these programs, states can pay a SEA allowance, instead of regular unemployment insurance benefits, to help unemployed workers while they are establishing businesses and becoming self-employed. Participants receive weekly allowances while they are getting their businesses off the ground. This is a voluntary program for states, and, to date, Delaware, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Vermont have active SEA programs. The SEA program could be used in tandem with a national veteran entrepreneur program in states where SEA is available.

The Entrepreneurship Boot Camp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV) is conducted through a partnership between SBA and IMFV at Syracuse University. EBV involves entrepreneurship training through a 14-month "boot camp" for service-disabled veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan who want to start or grow small businesses. It is designed to open the door and accelerate successful small business ownership for veterans.

Also, through this same partnership, SBA and IMVF at Syracuse University launched a program geared toward empowering the increasing number of women veterans, called Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (V-WISE). V-WISE graduates also receive follow-on mentoring in business and are connected to the full range of SBA programs and services.

Boots to Business (B2B) is the two step entrepreneurship training program offered by SBA as a training track within DoD's TAP, and open to service members and their spouses. The curriculum provides assistance to those interested in exploring business ownership or other self-employment opportunities by leading them through the key steps for evaluating business concepts and providing a foundational knowledge required to develop a business plan. In addition, participants are introduced to SBA resources available to access start-up capital, technical assistance and contracting opportunities. In FY 2015, the SBA continued to sustain and grow the B2B program; 14,419 transitioning service members and spouses benefited from the two-day Introduction to Entrepreneurship course, and an additional 1,173 participants benefitted from the eight-week online Foundations of Entrepreneurship course.

Boots to Business: Reboot (B2B|R) is a two-step entrepreneurial training program offered by SBA and is open to veterans of all eras, service members, and their spouses. SBA also partners with IMVF at Syracuse University on program curriculum development, course material, and instruction. To deliver this program, SBA collaborates with its resource partners (VBOCs, SBDCs, WBCs, and SCORE). In FY 2015, the SBA B2B|R, an initiative to extend the entrepreneurship track of the Transition Assistance Program to veterans who have already transitioned to civilian life, trained approximately 850 veterans and spouses in 58 B2B|R courses around the country.

The VIP Program is a veteran entrepreneurship program that specifically addresses federal procurement. SBA began supporting VIP through a cooperative agreement among SBA, the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, the State of Maryland, and private supporters. VIP is an accelerator-like in-residence educational training program for owners, principals, and C-level executives of veteran-owned businesses that consists of a 27-hour, 3-day comprehensive certification program instructed by professional service experts, government officials, and agency representatives. It is designed for veteran-owned businesses to increase their ability to win government contracts by establishing best business practices.

VA developed the "Doing Business with VA Reference Guide," a comprehensive, single point of reference created to help veteran businesses navigate through the VA contracting and procurement process. The reference guide features a small business success paradigm, information on VA procurement vehicles, a listing of top VA procurements, an organizational chart for VA contracting, and reference points to current and forecasted contracting opportunities.

The "Procurement Readiness Reference Guide," which may be used as a companion to the "Doing Business with VA Reference Guide," was also created to serve as an educational resource for veteran-owned small businesses seeking to learn best practices for preparation in doing business with VA. While drafting both guides, VA sought out feedback from veterans, veteran service organizations (VSOs), PTACs, and others.

The two guides allow small businesses the ability to confirm their level of procurement readiness and awareness before making the decision to seek out a contracting opportunity with VA. In FY 2014-FY 2015, 6 webinars, 20 outreach training sessions, and 3 commercial partnerships through *Doing Business with VA* training events were conducted by VA's OSDDBU to provide supplemental outreach to the two guides.

VA encourages the usage of these guides in counseling and training services provided by VA and other organizations for VOSBs. With a goal to increase the number of procurement-ready VOSBs, VA made procurement readiness a high level initiative in FY 2014 and FY 2015. VA will continue to expand this information with the VOSB community and grow the outreach program to support the expansion of webinars, live meetings, a YouTube mini-series and other training material to assist in the understanding of the importance of being procurement-ready when trying to do business with VA.

Approximately 124 learning sessions were offered for Veteran Small Businesses and other small businesses during the 2014 NSVBE in Atlanta, GA from December 9-11, 2014. Learning sessions highlighted topics supporting three tracks: Track 1— Business Development, Track 2— Doing Business with Federal Agencies and Commercial Companies, and Track 3— Advanced Procurement Strategies. The sessions were led by federal, commercial, and private industry procurement experts.

VA employed a DLA contract that led to the development of e-Learning modules to support training on the VA verification process. Training material featured online and DVD versions of the training course intended for VA personnel and PTAC counselors.

Benefits of the e-Learning training resource include:

- Enhanced accessibility and course tracking: The online course offers the benefits of a learning management system capable of providing statistical analysis, tracking of user results and ease of access for all .gov users.
- Increased flexibility: The DVD course offers the ability for non-VA personnel, particularly PTAC counselors, to access the full course at their convenience.

Next Steps:

In response to congressional requests for suggestions to enhance the MPP, DoD proposed the use of developmental assistance partners in state and local communities. The initiative could expand the use of MPP by increasing the subcontracting credit incentive when a mentor firm retains organizations representing the underserved populations.

DoD ultimately envisions a tiered program – where protégé firms undergo an initial assessment to determine what characteristics they need to develop to become a successful small business partner for a large defense contractor. These firms would be paired first with recent program graduates and developmental assistance partners before eventually transitioning to a large defense contractor. Veteran-owned businesses would be excellent candidates for the tiered approach to MPP.

In FY 2015, DoD will also create stronger incentives for industry primes and DoD program managers to pull technology solutions from DoD's SBIR/ STTR program investments, non-traditional suppliers, and entrepreneurs, and for inventors to push innovative ideas to program offices and other acquisition organizations.

DoD will leverage commercial developments in market research related information systems technology to create robust and dynamic information sharing systems to improve the transition of small business technology development into DoD programs and scan the commercial sector to identify and capture emerging technologies for DoD. The "Direct to Phase II" pilot program will explore how DoD can accelerate technology maturation and adoption. Veteran-owned businesses that participate in the SBIR/ STTR programs will position themselves to undergo the market pull initiatives that can accelerate product commercialization.

DOL will conduct a review of and expand and add links to entrepreneurship resources from the SBA and its resource partners, in both the Career One Stop Veterans ReEmployment portal and Competency Model Clearinghouse entrepreneurship websites, as appropriate to the content, and will provide outreach and technical assistance to increase awareness in the workforce development system about the availability of these resources.

In 2016, SBA's first outcome assessment survey will be conducted from a sample of the population of B2B participants since the program launch in January of 2014. Multiple projects were completed over the past two years to enable this assessment including putting in place SBA's first veteran-specific system of record to cover the required data collection, and developing and clearing the survey instrument via Paperwork Reduction Act and Privacy Act procedures. This survey will focus on B2B participants' business formation activity and on their intent to form businesses in the future. SBA seeks to understand the gestation period from intent to form a business to action for the transitioning service member, as well as any patterns in types of businesses formed and markets/industries pursued. SBA also seeks to understand the degree to which B2B contributed to the business formation decision and ultimately its success, as well as what other SBA or partner resources are utilized over time. Challenges remain with data sharing between SBA partners and other federal agencies, and the longitudinal tracking required to measure outcomes in the entrepreneurship domain, but this first outcomes survey will establish a baseline, contribute to the knowledge base, and guide future program refinements.

VA will continue revising its "Doing Business with VA" and "Procurement Readiness" online reference guides and training material for FY 2016 to keep veteran small businesses, small business liaisons, and other stakeholders updated on evolving changes to the VA procurement process.

"Doing Business with VA" webinars conducted by VA OSDDBU staff and VA Small Business Liaisons are planned throughout FY 2016. And, CVE will continue efforts to educate veteran business owners about the verification process through outreach events and webinars.

Development of a VA Learning University (VALU) curriculum on topics involving Doing Business with VA, the Veterans First Contracting Program, Procurement Readiness, the National Veterans Small Business Engagement, and verification for internal stakeholders (such as, the acquisition community, program managers, contracting officers, etc.) will also be an endeavor VA will take on in FY 2016.

NVSBE learning sessions will continue to be a medium for procurement representatives to provide the most comprehensive and current information on industry best practices, standards, and requirements for veteran stakeholders seeking to do business with VA and other government agencies.

Expansion of the verification process course, made available through DLA, will remain a priority in FY 2016 to include updates of the course material.

RECOMMENDATION #7: Improve information to existing service members and their spouses by revising the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to include information on entrepreneurship and business ownership resources.

Under TAP, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), DoD, DOL, and VA provide employment and training assistance to roughly 200,000 armed forces members and their spouses every year. This includes three days of employment workshops at 206 military installations, including information about job searches, career decision-making, resume preparation, interview techniques, and more. Until recently, TAP has provided limited support for assisting transitioning service members who want to become entrepreneurs.

Lead Agencies: SBA, DOL, DoD, and VA

Recommended Actions:

- Ensure that the Department of Labor can link to online assistance from SBA's resource partners including the SBA Learning Center,⁵ SCORE, SBDCs, WBCs, and VBOCs.
- Brief all Veterans Employment Initiative members, including the Department of Education, Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs. Educate Military Service Transition Managers of SBA resources to assist transitioning service members, veterans and spouses who are interested in starting their own businesses.
- Ensure that Department of Labor's grant recipients make basic entrepreneurial self-employment resources from SBA available to veterans to support referrals for veterans using American Job Centers. Enhance cooperation between DOL Veterans' Employment and Training Services staff and SBA field staff/partners to identify local small businesses interested in hiring veterans, especially Federal contractors.

Progress:

⁵ The original recommended actions under Recommendation #7 referred to the Small Business Technology Network, which is now call the SBA Learning Center.

DoD recently revamped TAP – incorporating an entrepreneurship and business ownership track into the curriculum. The department rolled out the new Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success) curriculum in 2013. Classes became available at all major overseas bases in FY 2014 and online training is now available through the Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) web site.

DOL’s SEA website (<http://sea.workforcegps.org/>) was updated and enhanced in FY 2014 to include useful resources and tools to promote entrepreneurship, including the SBA toolkit and training for entrepreneurs that was developed by the SBA and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

The SBA continued to sustain and grow the B2B program, which forms the entrepreneurship track of the DoD’s TAP. More than 12,000 transitioning service members and spouses benefited from the two-day introduction to entrepreneurship course; an additional 1,173 participants benefitted from the eight-week online Foundations of Entrepreneurship course.

Through the unique, creative, cost efficient public-private partnership with Syracuse University’s IVMF, the SBA launched B2B overseas in FY 2014 and, in FY 2015, conducted 92 courses for 1,377 participants at 30 installations across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

The SBA continued leveraging the B2B program to implement B2B|R, a co-sponsored extension of B2B that provides the introduction of entrepreneurship training to veterans of all eras and their spouses. B2B|R is delivered by SBA district offices, VBOCs, and other partners, further enhancing the creation of networks or ecosystems needed to support small business development.

Next Steps:

As part of its Transition GPS Initiative, DoD has also begun implementing a military life cycle (MLC) model – affording service members with the opportunity to take education and training throughout their military career to equip them with the skills needed to be successful in the civilian sector. This approach will fulfill the President’s call for a “career ready military” by ensuring service members are ready immediately upon separation.

DOL’s Employment and Training Administration (ETA) issued Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 12-10, *Supporting Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment Training Through the Workforce Investment System*, in late 2010, which provided a comprehensive listing of entrepreneurship resources that are used throughout the nationwide network of approximately 2,500 American Job Centers (AJCs). DOL will review TEGL 12-10 to determine if updates are needed.

From 2012-2015, DOL awarded multiple grants under Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) to support workforce system innovation by funding and rigorously evaluating new service delivery strategies. Two of the WIF grants, which received approximately \$20 million of the total funds awarded, are specifically targeted at promoting entrepreneurship. These WIF projects were

implemented during 2013 and are currently ongoing. Additionally, DOL's SEA website lists valuable resources related to entrepreneurship, such as the SBA Toolkit, and is available to AJC staff members via DOL's WorkforceGPS technical assistance platform.

In 2016, SBA will launch a marketing campaign directed at military spouses, and Reservists and National Guard members. Monthly webinars will inform participants about the entrepreneurship opportunities available to them through SBA's veteran entrepreneurship programs.

RECOMMENDATION #8: Ease navigation and create, or leverage an existing web portal that allows veterans to access entrepreneurship resources from across the government.

In February 2012, the Administration launched BusinessUSA.gov to make it easier for U.S. small businesses and exporters to access federal government resources. BusinessUSA.gov is a multi-agency effort and is jointly headed by SBA and the U.S. Department of Commerce (Commerce) to ensure businesses find what they need quickly and get consistent information regardless of where they begin their search. BusinessUSA.gov is a one-stop, central online platform where businesses of all sizes can access information about available federal programs without having to waste time navigating the federal bureaucracy. BusinessUSA.gov adopts a "No Wrong Door" policy that uses technology to quickly connect businesses to the services and information relevant to them, regardless of which agency's website, call center, or office they go to for help.

The formation of an interagency website to house entrepreneurial resources for veterans was proposed in previous Task Force reports. That recommendation is substantially fulfilled with the creation of BusinessUSA.gov/Veterans. By the end of FY 2013, a veteran considering entrepreneurial opportunities or one who already owns a small business could use a specialized section of the BusinessUSA.gov website to find a list of veterans programs, services, events, government contracting opportunities, and more. BusinessUSA.gov includes veteran programs, such as:

- Veterans Business Outreach Centers
- Entrepreneurship Boot Camps for Veterans with Disabilities
- Operation Endure and Grow
- Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship
- VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program and Innovative Initiatives
- Transition Assistance Program
- One-Stop Employment and Training Centers
- DoD's Yellow Ribbon Program
- Military One Source Program
- National Resource Directory
- National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

Lead Agencies: DoD, DOL, OMB, SBA, and VA

Recommended Actions:

- Create a customized veteran entrepreneurship profile that can be used in designing and developing the small business segment of the BusinessUSA.gov platform.
- Work with agency Offices of Small Business Utilization to provide more streamlined access to annual forecast information for contracting opportunities, information on agency mentor-protégé programs, and basic information about doing business with each agency.

Progress:

DoD is using small business websites and focusing on social media to increase communication with the small business community. The department developed or maintained websites that provide information on key initiatives that DoD is focused on throughout the fiscal year. Each of the 23 major buying commands in the DoD, among the Services and Agencies, provides web-based small business information relevant to their markets. For example, the DoD's small business websites provide online resources that make it easier and more readily accessible for the small business community to have access requirements. Additionally, several of the DoD Small Business Offices use social media, such as Facebook, to connect DoD needs and opportunities with the suppliers in many markets. These are all available to veteran-owned small businesses to acquire and use timely information.

SBA offers a universal gateway system at www.SBIR.gov providing a one-stop shop platform allowing veteran entrepreneurs to find funding opportunities from all 11 agencies that participate in the SBIR program. High-tech development needs expand across multiple agencies providing veteran entrepreneurs with a variety of options for participation among agency programs.

VA teamed up with BusinessUSA.gov in FY 2014 to build the Veteran Entrepreneur Portal (VEP) web site <http://www.va.gov/osdbu/entrepreneur>. The web site serves as a simple, one-stop resource for prospective VOSBs and experienced VOSBs alike seeking information on a variety of topics (from available contracting opportunities, financing options, business development, and much more) while guiding them through every step of entrepreneurship. The "How to Do Business with Federal Agencies" section of the site provides visitors with links to informational guides for veterans interested in doing business with other government agencies. VEP's clean look and crisp layout make it a user-friendly navigation tool for small business owners. The site has seen about a 300% increase in visitors since its inception.

In FY 2015, the VA OSDBU's collaboration with BusinessUSA.gov was awarded the U.S. Department of Commerce Honors Awards Gold Medal for Customer Service recognizing VEP's impact and significance as an innovative and dynamic integration site for the U.S. veteran-owned small business community.

Next Steps:

DoD revamped its SBIR/STTR Programs Small Business Portal to create a more user friendly experience with additional resources, better tools, and more responsive help desk services to

support the small business community. The new website helps small businesses understand the features and benefits of the program, find topics and information on solicitations, as well as the submission process. The new website will also assist the small business community by providing a more streamlined application process for SBIR/STTR programs. DoD will collaborate with the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) to develop a similar tool for both the MPP and Comprehensive Subcontracting Program as part of the new DCMA 360 online system.

VA, in close partnership with BusinessUSA.gov, will maintain VEP site resources so that they are updated and accurate. Additionally, in collaboration with Commerce, VEP will directly integrate its resources into a mobile application and a developed Application Programming Interface (API) that will automatically engage VA OSDDBU's calendar events with the BusinessUSA.gov site eliminating the necessity for manual feeds.

RECOMMENDATION #9: Find and reduce barriers that impede service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses from contracting with the U.S. Government.

The Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-50) expanded existing and established new assistance programs for veterans who own or operate small businesses. Pub. L. 106-50 instituted that “the government-wide goal for participation by small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans shall be established at not less than 3% of the total value of all prime contract/subcontract awards for each fiscal year.” It is important to fully understand the impediments SDVOSBs face in the overall contracting process to best support them in increasing contracting opportunities.

Although SDVOSBs gain more federal contracting dollars each year, not all agencies have met the government's congressionally mandated contracting goals, and continue to look for ways to improve performance. In 2015, for the fourth consecutive year, overall, the federal government exceeded the 3% mandated goal of federal prime contracting dollars awarded to SDVOSBs.

Lead Agencies: DoD, GSA

Recommended Actions:

- Have the contractor review data and databases and follow up with individual SDVOSBs willing to assist by answering a standard set of questions.
- Leverage study findings to determine actions most likely to reduce barriers for service-disabled veterans who contract with agencies across the federal government.

Progress:

DoD has undertaken an aggressive outreach effort to identify small business concerns that are owned and controlled by veterans and service-disabled veterans. The purpose of this DoD outreach effort is to improve prime and subcontracting opportunities for veteran and service-disabled veteran-owned small business concerns.

In 2013, the Secretary of Defense commissioned the RAND Corporation to do a study on “Improving Federal and Department of Defense Use of Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses. Subsequently, the DoD’s OSBP prepared several guides to assist veterans and service-disabled veterans – including Frequently Asked Questions, an SDVOSB Guide, and a 10-Step Guide for Doing Business with the DoD. These measures contributed to the highest achievements in DoD’s overall small business aspirational goals for SDVOSBs.

Presidential Executive Order 13360 also calls for a significant increase in federal contracting and subcontracting opportunities for service-disabled veteran-owned businesses. Accordingly, DoD developed a plan that addresses Presidential Executive Order 13360 which expands the eligibility for participation in the Mentor-Protégé Program to SDVOSBs and HUBZone small businesses in accordance with Pub. L. No. 108-375, § 842.

GSA increased training to veterans on “How to Do Business with GSA” and expanded and improved access to the System for Award Management (SAM) and FPDS databases to provide reports and other raw data within the confines of existing policy.

Next Steps:

DoD will continue to work with the Small Business Professionals within the department to encourage, empower and support their efforts to achieve the aspirational goal of 3% of all DoD procurement from SDVOSBs. DoD remains committed to the maximum practical allowance to create opportunities for small businesses to become prime contractors. DoD continues to look for additional opportunities to reduce barriers for veteran and service-disabled veteran-owned small business concerns, while upholding the requirements and standards required in government procurement contracts.

GSA will continue modernizing the Integrated Award Environment (SAM, FPDS, eSRS and seven other disparate data bases) for user friendly access and data collection. Survey results of veteran advocacy groups and agencies with successful goals best practices will be compiled and implemented for better veteran engagement. GSA will provide targeted training to this small business category specific to identifying veteran status and false veteran representation, and increase hosted small business live events with matchmaking and networking.

RECOMMENDATION #10: Reduce regulatory burdens by offering comment to agencies as they conduct their regulatory look back analysis under E.O. 13563, “Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review.”

Thoughtful review of regulations governing veteran entrepreneurship may reveal opportunities to reduce burdens on the veterans’ small business community. In early FY 2011, for example, the VA made changes to its regulations governing the verification of ownership and control of VOSBs and SDVOSBs to remove restrictions for participating in its verification program that were inconsistent with other federal small business programs and would stifle job creation and economic development.

Building on that, Executive Order 13563, *Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review*, required agencies to consider how best to promote retrospective analysis of rules that may be obsolete, unnecessary, unjustified, excessively burdensome, or counterproductive. Agencies published plans in August 2011 that reviewed their existing significant rules to determine if they should be modified, expanded, streamlined, or repealed to make their regulatory program more effective or less burdensome.

Several plans included analysis of issues of interest to veteran entrepreneurship. For example, the Federal Acquisition Regulatory (FAR) Council's plan aimed to simplify regulatory guidance for using partial set-asides and established new guidance to address the use of order set-asides to promote greater small business contracting in FY 2012, including those for service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses. Also, SBA's plan called for review of its SDVOSB program requirements and an analysis of the regulatory changes required and implications of implementing a single certification process for common information collected across its small business contracting programs, including the SDVOSB program.

Lead Agencies: OMB and SBA

Recommended Actions:

- Monitor agency retrospective regulatory reviews that affect the interests of SDVOSBs and VOSBs to offer input as changes are considered.

Progress:

The Task Force worked with the FAR Council to further implement the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010 authorities in the FAR. It also continued to monitor progress reported on performance.gov regarding government-wide progress in increasing use of set-asides under the simplified acquisition threshold (SAT).

OMB's Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) conducted the first-ever government-sponsored "Open Dialogue" on federal procurement to solicit public input, including from SDVOSBs and other small businesses, on ways to simplify the myriad of rules and other complexities that serve as unintentional barriers to entry into the federal marketplace and unnecessarily raise the cost of doing business with agencies. Feedback received during the dialogue focused around (1) taking greater advantage of commercial items and practices, such as by removing tracking and reporting burdens from GSA's Federal Supply Schedules Program, which accounts for approximately 10% of annual federal spending, (2) consolidating contractor reporting systems (to lower administrative costs for contractors and allow agencies to collect information from contractors once and use many times), (3) placing a greater emphasis on innovative contracting practices and solutions, and (4) creating clearer and easier pathways for young companies to enter the market. Based on this input, OFPP issued an action plan to build stronger vendor relationships, remove regulatory barriers to innovation, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal acquisition system.

The President's Budget for FY 2016 proposed modest statutory changes to make it easier for vendors seeking to bid on modestly-sized procurement and bringing more new companies into the federal marketplace. Specifically, the Administration requested authority to raise the SAT from \$150,000 to \$500,000 in order to broaden the range of purchases that can be accomplished with minimal complexity and government-unique requirements. The Administration also sought new pilot authority allowing agencies to set-aside work for new small businesses and other firms that have limited experience selling to the federal government, but can offer cutting-edge technology and more creative solutions to address the federal government's needs.

Finally, as part of OMB's ongoing efforts to improve cash flow for small businesses and increase small business participation in all levels of federal contracting, OMB renewed the "QuickPay" initiative for federal small business subcontractors, where the government pays its large contractors faster and, in return, requires them to pay their small businesses faster. In addition, the Task Force provided input on strategies that might be used over the longer term to facilitate accelerated payment to small businesses, including SDVOSBs.

Next Steps:

GSA will finalize regulatory changes to reform the Federal Supply Schedules' current pricing policies, which have been repeatedly cited by industry as among the most onerous in federal procurement.

To strengthen government accountability for the impact of new rules on companies who sell commercial items (including commercial "off-the-shelf" items) or conduct transactions under the SAT, the FAR Council will begin including a separate explanatory section in its rulemaking notices whenever a rule would apply to these types of acquisitions. This additional step will improve public awareness and better ensure affected small businesses and other stakeholders have greater context when providing feedback on the cost or other impact of a new rule that the regulatory drafters can then consider before the rule is finalized.

The Administration will continue to work with Congress on a suite of proposals to complement those proposed in the FY 2016 budget to reduce complexity and improve acquisition processes for common-acquired goods and services and innovative commercial items and other technologies.

OMB will issue guidance to encourage the creation of acquisition innovation labs, or similar mechanisms, that provide a pathway to test and implement more innovative approaches to acquisitions.

RECOMMENDATION #11: Coordinate and centralize information on veteran and service-disabled veteran-owned small business contracting opportunities across the government.

Federal contracting officers have generally been successful in understanding how to use set-aside programs to contract with SDVOSBs. However, there is no single source or streamlined process to help the acquisition community find and work with these firms most effectively.

Being able to navigate the acquisition system and understand the overall process has been a point of weakness in further developing and utilizing SDVOSBs.

Currently, the DoD's Maximum Practicable Opportunity (MaxPrac) Model uses the Federal Procurement Data System-Next Generation (FPDS-NG) data to identify contracts awarded to large businesses, but likely could have been performed by a small business, including SDVOSBs. This important identification method could prove valuable in assisting all agencies in reaching SDVOSBs.

SBA's Office of Government Contracting and Business Development convenes a monthly Small Business Procurement Advisory Committee (SBPAC) meeting where OSDDBU directors meet to discuss progress on their respective small business goal achievements. The directors share information about what tools and training are available to the federal acquisition workforce, exchange updates on legislative and regulatory changes, and draft best practices to agencies for guidance on maximizing small business goal achievement.

Already, several agencies (GSA, DOL, VA, and others) have collaborated to create an initial program design. Design elements are in the developmental stage, with additional requirements being identified and examined. As this is completed, draft design changes will be shared with agency principals for additional feedback and further revisions as appropriate. If successful, these efforts will create a product to better assist efforts already being conducted by agencies to expand exposure of available SDVOSBs.

Lead Agencies: DoD, GSA, SBA, and VA

Recommended Actions:

- Create an easier process for contracting officers to utilize established SDVOSBs so businesses will have greater access to available federal contracts.
- Create an online reference guide for the federal government contracting community and an educational video to support federal contracting officers in how to conduct market research and work with SDVOSBs.
- Identify and share best practices in how agencies maximize the effective use of SDVOSBs.

Progress:

In addition to the initiatives described in Recommendation #4, on September 2014, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (USD(AT&L)) established the Small Business Career Field as an acquisition workforce. The Small Business Director was designated as Functional Lead of the Small Business Career Field and serves as the senior subject matter expert relating to qualifications and career development requirements, such as education and training. DoD Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP) in collaboration with the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) has begun development of all nine small business courses as part of the Small Business certification curriculum. Through training, the Small Business Career Field will provide a workforce, for the department, to oversee and implement market research activities, improving access to DoD contracts by veteran business owners. The Small

Business Professionals will utilize the MRCoE tool to assist both veteran business owners and the contracting officers seeking to work with SDVOSBs and VOSBs.

GSA has moved this effort forward by: 1) Adding the [Federal Business Opportunity](#) link to forecast for easier project location; 2) Increasing communications to contracting staff on SDVOSB goal achievement; 3) Increasing communication to SDVOSBs on contracting opportunities; and 4) Increasing communication to both parties on sole-source justification.

SBA created online training to assist contracting officers and small business owners in understanding small business procurement rules and regulations. Twenty-five (25) self-paced courses are available with content covering small business certification programs, market research help for contracting officers, government contracting 101, etc.; and, are found on SBA's website at www.sba.gov/gclassroom.

VA developed the Veteran Entrepreneur Portal (VEP) primarily to assist VOSBs seeking small business resources and information. However, the website can alternatively be used as a cross-agency resource for finding best practices in government contracting throughout federal agencies. The portal includes sections on "Contracting Opportunities" and "How to Do Business with Federal Agencies" which make VEP an optimal reference point for those new to federal contracting. VEP is a one-stop site for all veteran business owners wanting to learn more about licensure, certification, finances, how to start a business and growing your business. The portal also directly integrates the small business information of all federal agencies as a part of site resources.

VA performed eleven training activities facilitated through OSDDBU between FY 2014 and FY 2015 which targeted VA Acquisition Professionals and Program Managers. Training topics included:

- Procurement Review Process Training for Acquisition Personnel
- Joint Ventures
- Subcontracting

VA's Acquisition Academy also worked hard with OSDDBU to put together a small business training module for VA acquisition professionals as part of its A-123 Webinar Series for VA Contracting Professionals and available through the Federal Acquisition Institute Application System.

In partnership with the DoD, VA took steps to develop a Market Research Platform to centralize information on market trends and supplier capabilities. This market intelligence tool would allow government buyers to make more informed decisions when seeking out small businesses that meet the requirements of their respective organizations.

The following accomplishments were made on the platform between FY 2014 and FY 2015:

- Defined an Acquisition Strategy and Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) Platform Partnering Strategy;
- Partnered with the Office of Information & Technology (OIT) and Federally Funded Research

- and Development Centers (FFRDC) for the SOA Plan;
- Deployed Event Management Services (EMS) 2.0;
- Established DoD/VA Interagency Agreement (IAA) to develop—
 - Goals Management;
 - Market Intelligence; and
 - Acquisition Analytics.

The future vision for the Market Research Platform is to standardize a fully functional, efficient EMS for Federal-wide implementation.

Next Steps:

In addition to the initiatives described in Recommendation #4, the established Small Business Career Field enables DoD OSBP to professionalize and shape the current and future small business workforce by developing cross-functional opportunities, career qualifications, education, and training that target Small Business Professionals. The workforce will operate independently of the Contracting Career Field, and will train Small Business Professionals to create opportunities for veteran-owned businesses within the contracting process.

Course topics currently under development include, but are not limited to, Introduction to Small Business Programs, Fundamentals of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) for Small Business Professionals, and Contract Lifecycle for Small Business Professionals. Currently, two small business pilots have been held. The courses will expand the implementation of established and continually evolving small business competencies across the workforce to improve performance. DoD OSBP also formally established a rotational assignment program to serve as a developmental platform with an emphasis on higher-level on the job training to accompany the rigorous classroom and online curriculum in development.

GSA will add set-aside information to the forecast of contracting opportunities, continue to add special training to highlight opportunities for veterans in GSA, and convene quarterly meetings with acquisition staff to populate the forecast and update access.

VA will include a best practices website, [Veterans Entrepreneur Portal](#), tailored specifically for government to use in support of educational material for Federal Contracting Officers and Commercial Opportunities. It will provide a gateway for VOSBs to get firsthand information regarding potential procurement opportunities. Collaboration between agencies will provide agency-specific information to share on the website.

New course training in FY 2016 will focus on educating VA acquisition professionals about simplified acquisitions, a new procurement review process, Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) set-asides, and the anticipated role of small business liaisons.

VA plans to leverage IT solutions that will enhance how VA does business with small businesses, particularly VOSBs, by deploying the following tools: Acquisition Analytics 1.0; Market Research 1.0/2.0/3.0; Goals Management 1.0/2.0/3.0; Acquisition Analytics 1.0/2.0/3.0; and, VIP Web Services.

RECOMMENDATION #12: Produce an agency-led assessment of veteran-owned small business achievements and contracting goals to increase veteran-owned small business utilization in prime contracting.

GSA is currently in the process of evaluating its own achievements and goals in federal contracting with veteran-owned businesses. DoD is assisting in this effort. Together, they are working to identify strategies which have the greatest potential to increase veteran-owned small business utilization in prime contracting. After specific areas are identified, they will target materials and resources to help increase contracting opportunities with veteran-owned small businesses.

Lead Agencies: DoD and GSA

Recommended Actions:

- Encourage each agency to conduct internal analyses to fully unveil the depth of veteran-owned small business involvement in their procurement activities.
- Leverage agency analyses to assess the need for and value of revised goals and procurement preference tools. Involve an outside party in this process, if helpful and/or necessary.

Progress:

DoD remains steadfast in its commitment to small business excellence in completing its diverse and complex mission. Small business professionals in the DoD procurement community participate in acquisition strategy reviews and independent peer reviews for all acquisitions over \$1 billion. This practice ensures that DoD contracting officers and program managers provide the maximum practicable opportunity for small business participation in all major acquisitions.

DoD's commitment to increasing small business participation has led to record breaking achievements in overall small business goals. DoD was able to meet its service-disabled veteran goal which earned DoD an "A" on its FY 2014 Small Business Procurement Scorecard. The department met its 23% small business goal and it also exceeded its 3% SDVOSB goal. DoD awarded over \$53 billion to small businesses – exceeding its 2013 results, both in terms of dollars and percentages.

Since defense contracts make up two-thirds of the entire government's contracting expenditures, DoD's success helped ensure that the federal government met its overall small business goals.

GSA increased internal training on buying requirements per the FAR and the General Services Administration Acquisition Manual GSAM and collected data specific to SDVOSBs in the MPP for increased program focus.

Next Steps:

The NDAA for FY 2016 included a variety of reforms to the defense acquisition process that transition oversight down to the service component and defense agency level. If these changes are enacted, DoD will work with the small business programs offices to ensure that the input of small business professionals continues to be incorporated into the acquisition process.

DoD continues its commitment to small businesses with an increased focus on professional development for its small business workforce. A dedicated workforce that encourages innovation also increases the DoD's return on investment, and the identification of opportunities for small businesses in defense acquisitions through market research, competition, and subcontracting. The continued professionalization of the DoD small business workforce will ensure veteran-owned businesses receive consideration at every practicable opportunity.

GSA will continue in its efforts to:

- Survey agencies successful at small business goal achievement in SDVOSB to determine best practices
- Implement survey results
- Increase contracting opportunities through set-asides
- Increase planned purchases to SDVOSB
- Increase communications to internal and external buying partners on SDVOSB value in contracting and capability to provide products and services
- Increase market research
- Increase SDVOSB's on Mentor Protégé Program and success rates of SDVOSB's

RECOMMENDATION #13: Increase collaboration on federal contracting opportunities between national veterans' advocacy groups and SBA's Office of Veterans Business Development.

Timely sharing and proper placement of federal contracting opportunities throughout the information networks of leading veterans' service organizations and advocacy groups is critical for helping connect contracting officers with VOSBs and SDVOSBs. However, the veteran small business community's responsiveness to Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and Requests for Information (RFIs) remains a challenge. More VOSBs and SDVOSBs will have the chance to find opportunities and submit bids – especially for smaller contracts – if stronger communication is fostered among these groups, federal OSDBUGs, contracting officers, and other federal and nonprofit partners. As an additional resource, the SBA can leverage its VBDOs and the VBOCs as outreach points and as a market research source for ensuring the VOSBs and SDVOSBs understand the responsive requirements for RFPs and RFIs.

Lead Agencies: DoD, GSA, and SBA

Recommended Actions:

- Provide additional marketing arms to ensure the best dissemination of opportunities to veteran business community in a timely fashion.

- Develop a concrete and coordinated outreach plan between SBA, GSA, and DoD and various veterans' advocacy groups.

Progress:

Throughout the year, DoD participates in various outreach events with the small business community to promote the SDVOSB program. In addition, the SBA collaborates with DoD to support the SDVOSB community. DoD held its Small Business Innovation Training Week with the SBA to promote collaboration on lessons learned and exchanged best practices on creating opportunities for SDVOSB firms. Another goal was to identify ways to improve the DoD small business programs and to ensure that SDVOSB businesses receive maximum opportunities to participate in acquisition programs.

Working with SBA, DoD ensured that small business professionals received training on a variety of topics – to include government contracting, collaboration with other agencies, SBIR/STTR programs, legislative and regulatory policy changes, commercialization and subcontracting programs, small business set-asides, DoD Better Buying Power initiatives, technology clusters, 8(a) and HUBZone programs, PTACs, and procurement forecasting. All of these elements strengthened the SBA-DoD relationship and enhanced the workforce's ability to serve veteran business owners.

GSA hosted a veteran event with SBA-provided training and counseling

- Hosted Veteran Advocacy groups meetings and training
- Developed targeted training and planned veteran group collaboration meetings which will start in Q1 of 2016

SBA has collaborated with stakeholders to participate in outreach events to small businesses to increase awareness of the 8(a) Business Development program. The SBA presented numerous training sessions to diverse audiences to promote the program. Further, the Agency significantly increased training of the federal contracting force by offering onsite sessions at 19 agencies. As a result, more than 800 federal contracting and acquisition leaders received training.

SBA works closely with its Government Contracting Area Offices, District Offices and resource partner network to ensure VOSBs and SDVOSBs receive their fair share of federal contracting opportunities. Specific to veterans, VBOCs play a critical role in providing entrepreneurship training and counseling to veterans, service members and their spouses. VBOCs represent a national network of 15 small business resource centers across the U. S.⁶ In FY 2015, VBOCs counseled 6,840 new clients, including 2,400 who were self-identified as women, and participated in 1,165 training events with a total of 46,859 attendees. VBOCs are unique in their ability to address veteran-specific challenges while integrating SBA services and referring clients when appropriate to other organizations for specialized and/or needed services. VBOCs bring

⁶ At the end of FY 2015, a total of 15 VBOC grantees existed. At the time of publication of this report, the number of VBOCs expanded to 20 centers nationwide.

together local and regional service networks creating the most effective small business ecosystems.

In accordance with the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999, VBOCs increased their participation and expertise in programs for service members transitioning from active duty to civilian life who aspire to be business owners. VBOC counselors continue to develop innovative programs to assist veteran-owned small businesses and entrepreneurs in their communities. These programs are focused on rural and urban locations, women veterans, franchising, corporate contract opportunities, and the high-tech community.

Next Steps:

DoD is developing a master outreach strategy plan that will encompass all small business category events to ensure the department has maximum participation from the components to promote small business opportunities. In FY 2015, DoD held a Mentor-Protégé Program Training Week, an Industry Day, and a Small Business Innovation Training Week. These events provided critical training to DoD small business professionals and connected industry leaders with small business owners. These events are excellent opportunities to enable the SBA, DoD, and veterans who are business owners to interact.

SBA's Office of Government Contracting (GC) regularly engages in interagency training events at both the local and national level. Procurement Center Representatives (PCRs) play a critical role in the decision-making process of federal procurements being set-aside for small business. The DoD SBA Small Business Innovative Training Week is a key engagement opportunity for SBA's PCRS. The training event presents a successful model for interagency collaboration and consideration should be given to extending this training activity across other agencies. A similar opportunity for collaboration between SBA and other federal agencies could help provide a pathway to breaking down existing barriers for SDVOSBCs attempting to participate in the federal market. Additionally, including SBA's VBDOs and VBOC representatives into this training model would help amplify collaboration opportunities specific to SDVOSBs.

RECOMMENDATION #14: Develop a streamlined, efficient, and clear certification process to be used by veterans and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses in federal procurement.

DoD plans to roll out its seminars on contract audits through the Defense Contract Audit Agency across the country in the near future.

Lead Agencies: DoD, SBA, and VA

Recommended Actions:

- Identify necessary resources for the VA, SBA, DoD, and other agencies for a streamlined certification process.

- Increase technology resources to allow for database refinement and sharing among all Federal agencies involved in VOSB and SDVOSB contracting.
- Continue to monitor Congressional proposals and evaluate their impact on agencies and the veteran and service-disabled veteran-owned small business contracting community.
- Develop a comprehensive proposal for streamlining and improving efficiencies, and creating clarity in the certification processes.

Progress:

The Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 that established restricted contracting in federal procurement for service-disabled veteran-owned small business concerns did not require a formal process to certify concerns as SDVOSB. Thus, an SDVOSB currently self-represents its status for all DoD contracts.

Verification for SDVOSBs and VOSBs under VA's Veterans First Contracting Program has improved substantially throughout the years. Through FY 2014-FY 2015, CVE saw a decrease in processing times and an increase in application approval percentages. At the same time, the VA made an effort to increase the number of resources for verification assistance.

In FY 2012, VA experienced a backlog on initial applications for verification with application processing times surpassing the regulatory period of 60 days. By FY 2013, processing times began to average below the regulatory 60 day period. Furthermore, processing times continued trending downward throughout FY 2014 and FY 2015.

While the processing time for initial applications became shorter and shorter from FY 2014- FY 2015, the percentage rate of initial approvals surged upward. In FY 2012, CVE saw about 53% of initial applications receiving approval statuses. However, by FY 2014-FY 2015, approximately 94% of initial applications had received approval statuses.

The high rate of approvals may be attributed to VA efforts to improve the verification program by offering a multitude of verification support services throughout the last two years. In line with these efforts, VA focused outreach efforts on the veteran small business community and PTAC counselors.

Throughout FY 2014- FY 2015, CVE participated in over 60 events involving outreach to SDVOSBs and VOSBs. These events included roughly 30 VA-hosted webinars on the VA verification program. The webinars provided interactive training to support veterans through all phases of the verification process and featured question and answer sessions with CVE subject matter experts.

In addition to the training of veteran small business owners, VA recognized the need to support those working closely with veterans to ensure their optimal chances of successfully completing the verification process—the Verification Assistance Counselors (VACs) at PTACs. VACs offer valuable, one-on-one support to veteran applicants and provide their services free of charge. About 24 VAC certification training courses with over 200 attendees were provided by VA from FY 2014-FY 2015.

The VA's VetBiz.gov (<http://www.vetbiz.gov>) website was also updated to include approximately 18 verification assistance briefs, 27 fact sheets, and over 80 frequently asked questions in 7 categories including information on the following: Applying for Verification; Direct Access Program; Small Business; Starting a Business; Vendor Information Pages (VIP) Database; Verification Process; and the Veterans First Contracting Program. Resources are available to all visitors of the VetBiz website.

VA noted concern from the small business community and Congress regarding fraudulent firms in VIP. In addition to the rigorous nature of the verification process, VA takes great strides to mitigate and deter abuse of the Veterans First Contracting Program.

In FY 2015, VA's CVE reviewed more than 180 complaints, and as CVE does not investigate companies who are suspected of committing alleged fraud, CVE referred about five firms to the VA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for investigation. Individuals who suspect firms in VIP to be non-compliant with one or more of the regulatory requirements of the Veterans First verification program are encouraged to complete the 38 CFR Part 74 Non-Compliance Referral Form and submit to vacoverreferrals@va.gov. A copy of the form and fact sheet on the procedures for reporting ineligible, fraudulent firms was made available online and can be found on the VetBiz Web site at <http://www.va.gov/osdbu/library/factsheetnoncompliancereferral.asp>.

At the beginning of FY 2015, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs implemented the MyVA initiative with the objective to provide "a seamless, unified Veteran Experience across the entire organization and throughout the country."⁷ The MyVA initiative prioritized putting veterans first and led the way for VA organizations to examine how existing programs might be improved. In FY 2015, VA sought out feedback from veteran focus groups hosted by OSDBU on the "As Is" verification process. Veterans were invited to attend two July sessions to share pain points they confronted throughout the life of the entire VA process from the initiation stage to the determination stage. Feedback from the two sessions was compiled in to a focus group matrix shared online and contributed to the development of a new process, in line with the MyVA initiative, that streamlined verification for the veteran applicant.

The new verification process introduces a more veteran-friendly, less burdensome approach to verification without compromising the program's integrity. Main elements to the new process include:

- A case management team (assigned to each applicant) consisting of one case manager and one evaluator allowing the veteran direct accessibility to those with firsthand knowledge of application issues and status information.
- Application procedures are reduced (from the current processes' five phases) down to three phases (which include a pre-qualification assessment, an evaluation, and a determination).
- Single points of failure are identified early on in the process allowing the veteran to withdraw, fix or explain them prior to heading into the phases of evaluation and

⁷ Source: Department of Veterans Affairs, MyVA Integrated Plan (MIP) Overview, July 30, 2015

determination.

A trial of the new process was initiated in July 2015 and continues running today. VA continues to modify the new process as it receives feedback from trial participants.

Next Steps:

If Congress determines that an SDVOSB certification process is necessary, DoD will look to the VA as the subject matter expert, since VA has established an SDVOSB certification program for its Veterans First Contracting Program.

VA will continue to monitor and track allegations of fraud within the VA Veterans First Contracting Program.

CVE plans to transition from the current verification process into the new process by April 2016.

Leveraging technology to support VA's engagement with the veteran small business community and the verification process will remain a high priority in FY 2016. To accomplish this, VA will work to develop and cultivate the Veteran Enterprise Management System (VEMS). VEMS will consist of tools and systems to support VA programs, an enterprise software platform to integrate the use of these tools, and an infrastructure to host VEMS. Specific activities meant to drive the development of VEMS include:

- Expand Event Management Software as a Service
- Implement Goals Management System
- Develop and implement SOA eco system to support functionality developed as part of VEMS
- Implement Business.VA.gov Portal
- Develop Engagement Management System consisting of:
 - Predictive Analytics Tool
 - Small Business Intelligence Tool (SBIT)
 - Risk Management Tool
 - Event Management Tool
- Develop and implement Verification Case Management Tool
- CRM/BPM/Document Management

RECOMMENDATION #15: Vest the GI Bill benefits as a property right, allowing veterans to use funds both for education and for small business creation activities such as counseling and business financing.

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (GI Bill), Public Law 110-252, provides financial support for education and housing to individuals with at least 90 days of service on or after September 11, 2001, and individuals discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days or more of service. These long-term government commitments help ensure the growth and security of the United States.

Allowing veterans to use either a portion or all of their GI Bill benefits to receive entrepreneurial education and finance a small business startup would provide another career opportunity for

veterans whose goals do not include a higher education degree. Many veterans choose self-employment as a career track, and a growing number of colleges and universities provide entrepreneurial/small-business development training targeted to veterans, service-disabled veterans, care givers of disabled veterans and reserve component members and their families. If properly administered, allowing veterans to use some or all of their earned benefits to pursue self-employment could provide multiple economic benefits.

Lead Agencies: DoD, SBA, and VA

Recommended Actions:

- Determine potential impact and value—both in terms of potential costs to the GI Bill program as well as potential impact of increasing job creation by making this change.
- Develop risk mitigation strategies and robust criteria for veterans who would be interested in using these funds toward entrepreneurial training programs, business development, and capital.
- Examine regulatory or legislative changes necessary to allow approval of entrepreneurial small business development programs for GI Bill payments, and to allow eligible veterans to utilize their existing GI Bill eligibility to participate in entrepreneurial training and receive startup capital

Progress:

Congress has considered creating an entrepreneurial GI Bill benefit on several occasions – the most recent proposal being the Veterans Entrepreneurial Transition Act of 2015. This measure has received mixed opinions from veteran service organizations.

Next Steps:

DoD notes that an entrepreneurial GI Bill benefit might serve as an additional recruiting incentive – helping make military service a pathway to the middle class by enabling veterans to become small business owners. It also has the potential to help broaden the defense industrial base, as veterans might be more likely to pursue ventures doing business with DoD, capitalizing on their previous military experiences. However, since such a measure lies firmly within lawmakers’ purview, DoD has no official position on the proposal until enabling legislation is passed by Congress.

RECOMMENDATION #16: Research and direct policy efforts around current veteran macroeconomic issues by conducting a more in-depth analysis of veteran unemployment, employment, and self-employment.

The VA consistently conducts research on relevant macroeconomic topics related to veterans including unemployment, healthcare, and education. Additionally, the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) capture vital macroeconomic data, some of which is segmented for veterans. However, this information is not fully coordinated or integrated to

help inform federal policy decisions, uncover gaps in data collection, or empower veterans' service organizations to meet their mission.

This information could be particularly useful in a number of ways, such as understanding both the education levels earned by veterans and the skills veterans acquire in military training and in private industry experience. It could also help identify industries where veterans have increased prospects for and levels of long-term employment. In addition, it could help in identifying those series in which veterans tend to outperform those without military experience.

Lead Agencies: DoD, DOL, SBA, and VA

Recommended Actions:

- Conduct a more in-depth analysis of veteran unemployment, employment, and self-employment through the Department of Labor BLS data, Census and other available Federal data sets.
- Inventory existing reports—Census data, SBA Office of Advocacy reports, academic research—that examine the trends in veterans' unemployment and business development.
- Identify key employment trends including high-growth veteran industries and industries of highest veteran job loss (by NAICS code).
- Design recommendations for future programs and program changes based on a deeper analysis of veteran unemployment, employment, and self-employment, and business ownership.

Progress:

In 2014, the Secretary of Defense commissioned the RAND Corporation to do a study on “Why is Veteran Unemployment So High?”

According to this study, the best available evidence supports the hypothesis that relatively high rates of veteran unemployment reflect the fact that veterans, especially younger veterans, are more likely to have recently separated from a job – namely, military service. Consequently, they are more likely to be engaged in job searches, which take time, especially during periods of slow economic growth. The study also concluded that the available evidence provided little support to the hypothesis that veterans were inherently disadvantaged in the civilian labor market.

To address service members' transition out of the military, DoD redesigned TAP. See Recommendation #7 for additional background on the program, which includes entrepreneurship training to enable new veterans to start small businesses.

DOL's Chief Evaluation Office (CEO), in collaboration with DOL's VETS and Women's Bureau, also initiated a study on women veterans to develop a quantitative statistical descriptive profile of women veterans and their economic and employment characteristics. This report was completed in FY 2015. The report is titled Women Veteran Economic and Employment

Characteristics at <https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/WomenVeteranEconomicandEmploymentCharacteristics.pdf>.

The CEO also sponsored a study analyzing veteran participant characteristics, services, and employment in VETS and ETA programs. This 12-month project examined the characteristics, services, and employment outcomes for veterans using ETA and VETS data from the Enhanced Data Reporting Validation System. The main objectives of this project were to provide an overall summary of the characteristics of and services provided to veterans and to analyze services and employment outcomes for veterans compared to non-veterans. This report was released in FY 2015 and is available on the DOL website with the title “Veteran and Non-Veteran Job Seekers: Exploratory Analysis of Services and Outcomes for Customers of Federally-Funded Employment Services for Customers of Federally-Funded Employment Services,” at <https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/VeteranNon-VeteranJobSeekers.pdf>.”

On March 24, 2014, revised regulations went into effect that create greater accountability on the part of federal government contractors and subcontractors for their employment practices related to the hiring, recruitment, promotion, and retention of veterans. The Vietnam Era Veterans’ Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA) regulations, issued by DOL’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), are at 41 CFR Part 60-300. Information about the revised regulations is at <http://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/vevraa.htm>. Under VEVRAA, it is illegal for covered federal contractors and subcontractors to discriminate against protected veterans in employment decisions. These contractors are also required to take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain qualified protected veterans, including disabled veterans. The revised VEVRAA regulations require, among other things, that covered contractors list their job vacancies with the appropriate state or local employment service and provide notice that they are federal contractors and desire priority referrals of veterans, annually document and assess the effectiveness of their outreach and recruitment activities targeting protected veterans, and establish an annual hiring benchmark for protected veterans.

Revised regulations implementing Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 were published in 2013 and became effective on March 24, 2014. These OFCCP regulations are at 41 CFR Part 60-741. Information about these regulations is at <http://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/section503.htm>. While not specific to veterans, disabled veterans may also benefit from the statute and these regulations prohibiting covered federal government contractors and subcontractors from engaging in employment discrimination based on an individual’s disability and require these contractors to take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities. The revised regulations, among other things, establish a nationwide 7% utilization goal for qualified individuals with disabilities, require that contractors and subcontractors invite applicants and employees to voluntarily self-identify as having a disability, and mandate that these contractors annually document and assess the effectiveness of their outreach and recruitment activities targeting qualified individuals with disabilities.

Even though both sets of regulations became effective in March 2014, those contractors and subcontractors that had written affirmative action programs (AAPs) in place on the effective date of the regulations were permitted to delay their compliance with the revised AAP

requirement until the start of their next annual AAP. This, in addition to OFCCP's scheduling process for conducting contractor compliance evaluations and the average length of an evaluation if a violation is indicated, makes it premature to report on the extent to which contractors are complying with these revised requirements.

In FY 2014 and FY 2015, DOL expanded the number of evaluations and research projects related to veterans' employment and DOL veterans' programs and services. In addition to the two reports mentioned above, other evaluations include: (1) Providing Services to Veterans Through the Public Workforce System: Findings from the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation (report completed in FY 2015 and available at https://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm?fuseaction=dsp_resultDetails&pub_id=2569&mp=y); (2) Army Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Military Members (UCX) Claimants Initiative Evaluation (report expected in FY 2016); (3) Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Evaluation (report expected in FY 2016); and (4) the Evaluation of the Transition Assistance Program (report expected in FY 2016, and based on an earlier evaluability assessment completed in FY 2013).

At DOL, ETA is also initiating the Self-Employment Training (SET) Demonstration to assist dislocated workers interested in creating businesses in their fields of expertise. The SET Demonstration is a pilot program designed to test a model in which people interested in self-employment have access to self-employment advisors who assess participants' needs on an ongoing basis and provide one-on-one tailored support to help participants establish their business. The SET Demonstration also offers participants up to \$1,000 as seed capital grants once they complete specific milestones toward opening their business. SET Demonstration services are delivered by local microenterprise service providers, with participating AJCs and the Unemployment Insurance program assisting with outreach. The evaluation contract was awarded in June 2011.

The actual demonstration launched during the summer of 2013 in all four participating sites. The four sites participating in the study – Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, and Portland, Oregon – implemented the intervention more slowly than expected, and two of the sites experienced a lower rate of enrollment than planned. In order to achieve the minimal sample size for statistical power, additional outreach efforts were employed in those sites, and the other two sites were allowed to continue enrollment. All sites continued enrollment of participants through December 2015, and self-employment service receipt (for 12 months) will continue for those enrolled near the end of the enrollment period.

In November 2013, SBA's Office of Advocacy released its Issue Brief #1, Profile of Veteran Business Owners (available at <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/Issue%20Brief%201,%20Veteran%20Business%20Owners.pdf>) which was updated in May 2014 by Issue Brief #7, Profile of Veteran Business Owners: 2013 (available at: <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/Issue-brief-7-profile-of-veteran-business-owners.pdf>). The original information product was developed using data collected in the Census Bureau's 2008 and 2012 Surveys of Income and Program Participation (SIPP); the update included 2013 SIPP data. The proportion of younger veteran business owners (those under age 35) increased from 4.6% of all veteran business owners in 2008 to 6.1% in

2013, while the share of non-veteran owners in the same age group decreased from 18.5% of all non-veteran business owners in 2008 to 16.2% in 2013.

Prior Office of Advocacy data products on veterans' business ownership use data from the Census Bureau's 2007 and 2012 Survey of Business Owners (SBO). There are important differences between the SIPP and SBO data sources, both in terms of their methodology and definitions of businesses and their characteristics. Accordingly, the data presented in the *Issue Briefs* are not necessarily comparable to that in other Office of Advocacy veteran-related data products. However, the new SIPP-based product provided important new insights by allowing comparisons of changes in veterans' business ownership characteristics between 2008 and 2013. The veterans' business ownership *Issue Briefs* are posted on the Office of Advocacy's website at <https://www.sba.gov/advocacy/issue-briefs>.

There has been an increasing demand for longitudinal data to measure the performance and survival of businesses owned by veterans over time, as compared to that of firms owned by non-veterans. Although there are a number of sources of such longitudinal data on businesses in general, longitudinal information on veteran-owned businesses has been lacking.

In February 2014, SBA's Office of Advocacy released a contract research report addressing this gap. This report, *An Exploration of Veteran Business Creation and Management Using the Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation*, examined the experience of eleven separate groups (called "panels") of veterans who are business owners and their firms through 28-month periods beginning in base years from 1984 through 2004. Some analyses in this study combined multiple panels in order to provide larger statistical samples. Although many aspects of business ownership and management were very similar among both veterans and non-veterans, a number of differences were identified or suggested.

- There was a high level of firm creation and management among veterans, comparable to that of their non-veteran age peers.
- When all panels and age groups were combined, new business creation by male veterans was slightly lower than that for non-veterans. This difference is due to the disproportionately large number of veterans in older age cohorts that have lower levels of firm creation.
- Veterans involved in business creation and management were in better financial condition compared to wage and salary earning veterans.
- Business ventures managed by veterans aged 35 and older were quite similar to non-veteran-owned businesses in terms of size, management, and duration. However, ventures managed by younger veterans (aged 18-34) appeared to have had slightly fewer employees, lower sales, and shorter durations than those managed by their non-veteran age peers.

This exploratory study added value to existing government data resources not originally meant for its purpose. Hopefully, it will open new lines of research to examine some of the questions that it has raised, particularly about the comparative experiences of different veteran age cohorts. This is of particular importance because, when data about veterans of all ages are aggregated, the large number of older veterans in the total often masks data relating to younger cohorts, data which, if disaggregated by age group, may disclose age-specific differences of interest to policymakers. The study and a 2-page Research Summary are posted

at <https://www.sba.gov/content/exploration-veteran-business-creation-and-management-using-census-bureaus-survey-income-and>.

In November 2014, SBA's Office of Advocacy released another contract research study entitled *Income and Net Worth of Veteran Business Owners over the Business Cycle, 1989–2010*. The study focused on the changing financial health of veterans during recent economic cycles. In particular, it examined changes in income and net worth for all veteran and non-veteran households and for those owning small businesses during the period 1989 to 2010, a period of extremes covering several economic expansions and contractions. The study utilized data from the Federal Reserve Board's Surveys of Consumer Finance to evaluate the financial health of both veteran and non-veteran households. Among the study's findings:

- Veterans who were small business owners fared better financially than veterans who did not own small businesses.
- The percentage of veteran households among all households declined from 30.7% in 1989 to 19.5% in 2010. The number of veteran households with small business ownership declined by over 28%, or 1.1 million households, over the same period. This decline is largely due to the aging of the veteran population and the fact that the population age 65 and over increased at a faster rate than the overall population between 2000 and 2010, including veterans.
- Veteran households were less likely to be classified as high income (for the purposes of this study, annual income greater than \$75,900 in 2010 dollars) and more likely to have lower mean income than non-veteran households. The percentage of non-veteran households with high income increased from nearly 20% in 1989 to over 26% in 2010, while the share of veteran households with high-income decreased from 36% to under 32%, probably due to the aging of the veteran population.
- Significant increases were seen in the share of veteran-owned and non-veteran-owned small business households having high net worth. Both sets of households realized very similar increases of over 60%. Regression analysis suggested that veteran-owned small business households had significantly lower net worth than non-veteran-owned small business households.

This study and its accompanying 2-page Research Summary are posted at <https://www.sba.gov/advocacy/income-and-net-worth-veteran-business-owners-over-business-cycle-1989-2010>.

Next Steps:

As DOL's evaluations are completed, DOL will assess the findings to better inform future programs and program changes based on deeper analyses of veteran unemployment, employment, self-employment, and business ownership.

DOL's BLS publishes a variety of products that provide data on labor market characteristics of veterans. Some of BLS's products include analyses of the data. A list of BLS's products is included in Appendix A.

In December 2015, the Census Bureau released its most current data on veteran-owned businesses and their owners, as collected in its major [Survey of Business Owners \(SBO\)](#) for data year 2012. This important source of information on businesses of all types and their owners is conducted only once every five years. SBA's Office of Advocacy worked closely with Census, veterans' service organizations, and other stakeholders in the veteran entrepreneurship community to improve veteran-related questions in the SBO. These revised questions were approved by OMB during the rigorous Paperwork Reduction Act review process and will provide new information on firms owned by service-disabled veterans, as well as first-time data on businesses owned by members of the National Guard and Reserve components, as well as data on firms owned by post 9/11 veterans.

Information on these and other new Office of Advocacy research products can be accessed as they are released at <https://www.sba.gov/category/advocacy-navigation-structure/research-and-statistics>.

RECOMMENDATION #17: Explore revisions to unemployment compensation for ex-service members (UCX) to support small business creation.

The current system of unemployment compensation for ex-service members, abbreviated as UCX, provides financial support to recently discharged veterans while they pursue traditional forms of employment. However, in general, most states do not recognize self-employment as pursuing employment, and thus veterans' UCX compensation is terminated if they visibly pursue self-employed small business ownership as their vocational goal.

The Task Force believes that returning veterans need all reasonable financial support available to them through existing federal programs or modification to existing programs to pursue self-employment. In most states, veterans are presently limited to looking for third-party employment to maintain UCX payments. While we recognize that current statute and practice allow states considerable autonomy in administering the SEA program, the Task Force supports and would welcome the chance to explore alternatives, including legislative changes to encourage greater entrepreneurship among eligible veterans.

Lead Agencies: DoD, DOL, SBA and VA

Recommended Actions:

- Examine unemployment compensation for ex-service members authority and consider legislative changes to the UCX program to allow eligible veterans to collect UCX payments during and after participating in an SBA-affiliated entrepreneurial small business training program, or a VA State Approving Agency approved program.

Progress:

States administer the UCX program on behalf of the federal government and, in general, eligibility requirements that apply to regular unemployment compensation (UC) must apply to

UCX under the individual state UI law. SEA is available in seven states: Delaware, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Vermont. States may voluntarily operate a SEA program provided that the state amends its UC law to allow SEA to be paid in lieu of regular unemployment benefits. Individuals who are determined most likely to exhaust benefits and in need of services may participate in an SEA program, including individuals who are receiving UCX. Under the UCX program, service members may take advantage of any of these programs – as they are eligible to apply for unemployment compensation in any state with no previous residency requirement.

Next Steps:

As this program exists in a limited fashion, DoD will work with SBA to incorporate this information into the Boots to Business Program – helping make transitioning service members aware of the options available to them upon separation from the military.

RECOMMENDATION #18: Examine the establishment of a new small business procurement initiative for firms whose total workforce is comprised of at least 35% or more veterans.

The federal government currently utilizes a set-aside program that allows certain small businesses to compete for federal contracts based on having a certain percentage of their workforce residing in a historically-underutilized business zone (HUBZone). This designation helps areas that are hard hit with high unemployment levels. The same principle could be applied to small business contractors that employ a certain percentage of veterans.

The creation of a new small business subcategory for firms hiring veterans would provide hiring incentives and procurement opportunities for small businesses that hire veterans or guard and reserve members. In addition to providing employment opportunities, this action would provide another “tool” to assist the federal government in achieving overall procurement goals for all small business categories, including service-disabled veterans.

Implementation of this recommendation presents an opportunity for a creative change that requires additional regulatory guidance but not exhaustive new rulemaking. The intent is to review and build on existing authority and implement procedurally, by using already established agency capabilities.

Lead Agencies: DoD, DOL, OMB, SBA, and VA

Recommended Actions:

- Outline the necessary regulatory guidance, timeline, and potential barriers to success with a HUBZone-like designation model for business that employ more than 35% veterans.
- Explore alternative models such as tax relief for hiring veterans or for exceeding 35% of veterans employed by a small business.

Progress:

As explained in prior annual reports, SBA and other agencies have concluded that creation of a HUBZone-like set-aside program for businesses that employ at least 35% veterans would require statutory changes. As a result, the Task Force turned to the FAR Council for help in considering alternative administrative approaches that might increase attention on and accountability for federal contractors' veteran employment practices.

Initial discussions centered around contractor past performance and the idea of beginning to measure regulatory compliance as part of the evaluation of a contractor's performance, such as compliance with the VEVRAA regulations, published in 2013 which create greater accountability on the part of covered federal government contractors and subcontractors for their employment practices related to the hiring, recruitment, promotion, and retention of veterans protected by VEVRAA. To date, FAR regulations and supporting policies related to contractor performance evaluations have not expressly focused on regulatory compliance. Although contractor performance evaluations have included an "other" category as a catch-all for consideration of miscellaneous issues, this has resulted in inconsistent attention being given to compliance requirements, such as reporting or benchmarking.

In July 2014, the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) guide, which is relied on by agencies across government, was amended to add the term "regulatory compliance" to the list of express factors that are to be considered in a performance evaluation. The guide was further amended to include a list of questions to be answered with regard to regulatory compliance, such as "Has the contractor complied with all contract clauses and reporting requirements?" These changes lay the foundation for more concerted consideration of a contractor's compliance with DOL regulations, and companion FAR changes in Part 22.13 that implement VEVRAA and require covered contractors to have written AAPs and establish benchmarks for hiring protected veterans. Covered contractors must maintain records related to their benchmark for three years, allowing them to assess the success of their outreach and recruitment efforts for protected veterans over time.

In FY 2015, the FAR Council opened a case to identify "regulatory compliance" as a separate evaluation factor in CPARS and ensure the practice introduced in the CPARS guide is implemented in a consistent manner. The rulemaking process provided an opportunity for the Task Force to request explicit reference to VEVRAA as an example of a compliance requirement that should be highlighted and for the public to provide feedback on how contractor compliance is best addressed in the agency's evaluation report – e.g., should input be limited to narrative, should questions about compliance be evaluated on a simple yes/no or pass/fail basis, etc.

In FY 2015, VA implemented a requirement to include Veteran Employment as a criteria factor for vendors bidding on Transformation Twenty-One Total Technology Next Generation (T4NG) contracts. Offerors, regardless of size status, must now include a Veterans Employment Certification (VEC) Report to include the total number of veterans employed with their firm along with the total number of employees working at the firm at the time of the proposal. Contractors are required to submit the VEC Report to the contracting officer on a quarterly basis. Failure by the contractor to maintain the veterans employment numbers reported at the

time of their proposal may result eliminate the contractor from consideration for future task orders.

Next Steps:

If directed through congressional legislation and implemented in acquisition regulations, DoD will seek to achieve goals associated with a veteran employment standard.

The Task Force will explore how a contractor’s regulatory compliance with VEVRAA and other requirements will be evaluated and whether regulatory changes are needed.

VA will monitor how the Veterans Employment Certification Report impacts Transformation Twenty-One Total Technology Next Generation (T4NG) Contracts, and will continue looking at ways it can incentivize veteran employment by small businesses and other organizations.

The Task Force will support FAR Council efforts as it seeks public comment on its rulemaking to address regulatory compliance in past performance evaluations and considers the feasibility of expressly calling out requirements in VEVRAA that establish a benchmark and requirement to maintain records. The Task Force will also work with the FAR Council as it revisits the feasibility of allowing a contracting officer to establish an evaluation criterion that gives preference in the best value analysis to businesses meeting the benchmark of veterans as employees. As part of these efforts, VA will share with the Task Force its observations regarding the impact of the VEC on incentivizing increased veteran employment in its federal contracts.

Appendix 1 - Glossary for Acronyms

AJC	American Job Centers
ASI	American Supplier Initiative
B2B	Boots to Business Program
CAP	Capital Access Program
CAP-Goals	Cross Agency Priority Goals
CDLF	Community Development Loan Fund
CMC	Competency Model Clearinghouse
COS	Career One Stop
DAU	Defense Acquisition University
DCAA	Defense Contract Audit Agency
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DoD	Department of Defense
DOL	Department of Labor
EBV	Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities
ETA	Employment and Training Administration
FACA	Federal Advisory Committee Act
GC	Government Contracting
GSA	General Services Administration
HUBZone	Historically Underutilized Business Zones
MRCoE	Market Research Center of Excellence
MaxPrac	Maximum Practicable Opportunity
OEF/OIF	Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom
OEG	Operation Endure and Grow
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OSBP	Office of Small Business Programs - DoD
OSBU	Office of Small Business Utilization--GSA
OSDBU	Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
RFI	Request for Information
RFP	Request for Proposals
SBA	Small Business Administration
SBDC	Small Business Development Centers
SBIR	Small Business Innovation Research
SBLF	Small Business Lending Fund
SBO	Survey of Business Owners
SBPAC	Small Business Procurement Advisory Council
SCORE	Service Corps of Retired Executives
SDVOSB	Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business
SSBCI	State Small Business Credit Initiative
STBN	Small Business Technology Network
STTR	Small Business Technology Transfer
TAP	Transition Assistance Program
Task Force	Interagency Task Force on Veterans Business Development
TEGL	Training and Employment Guidance Letter

Transition GPS	Transition-Goal, Plan, Success
Treasury	Department of Treasury
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
VBDO	Veterans Business Director Officer
VBOC	Veterans Business Outreach Center
VEI	Veterans Employment Initiative
VOSB	Veteran-Owned Small Business
VIP	Veterans Institute for Procurement
V-WISE	Women Veterans Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship
WBC	Women’s Business Centers
WIF	Workforce Innovation Funding

Appendix 2 - Task Force Members

Task Force Chair	Douglas J. Kramer, Deputy Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration
Member	Barbara E. Carson, Associate Administrator, Office of Veterans Business Development, U.S. Small Business Administration
Member	Eric Ferraro, Assistant Commissioner, Integrated Award Environment, Federal Acquisition Service, U.S. General Services Administration
Member	Dr. James Galvin, Deputy Director for Portfolio Management & Outreach, U. S. Department of Defense
Member	Mathew Blum, Associate Administrator, Office of Federal Procurement Policy, Office of Management and Budget
Member	Thomas J. Leney, Executive Director, Office of Small and Veteran Business Programs, Department of Veterans Affairs
Member	Timothy Colon, Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Department of Treasury
Member	William “Bill” Metheny, Director, Office of Field Operations, Veterans’ Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor
Member	Davy Leghorn, Assistant Director, Veterans Employment and Education Division, The American Legion
Member	Amanda Bainton, Deputy Director, Career Transition Services
Member	Victor Klingelhofer, Member, Vietnam Veterans of American
Member	Max V. Kidalov, J.D., LL.M., Assistant Professor, Procurement Law & Policy, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School

Appendix 3 - Executive Order

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
For Immediate Release April 26, 2010

EXECUTIVE ORDER INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON VETERANS SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 102 of title I of the Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-186) (the "Act"), and in order to establish an interagency task force to coordinate the efforts of Federal agencies to improve capital, business development opportunities, and pre-established Federal contracting goals for small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans and service-disabled veterans, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Establishment. The Administrator of the Small Business Administration (Administrator) shall establish within the Small Business Administration an Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development (Task Force).

Sec. 2. Membership. The Administrator shall serve as Chair of the Task Force and shall direct its work. Other members shall consist of:

- (a) a senior level representative, designated by the head of the respective department or agency, from each of the following:
 - (i) the Department of the Treasury;
 - (ii) the Department of Defense;
 - (iii) the Department of Labor;
 - (iv) the Department of Veterans Affairs;
 - (v) the Office of Management and Budget;
 - (vi) the Small Business Administration (in addition to the Administrator); and
 - (vii) the General Services Administration; and
- (b) Four representatives from a veterans' service or military organization or association, who shall be appointed by the Administrator.

Sec. 3. Functions. Consistent with the Act and other applicable law, the Task Force shall:

- (a) consult regularly with veterans service and military organizations in performing the duties of the Task Force
- (b) coordinate administrative and regulatory activities and develop proposals relating to:
 - (i) improving capital access and capacity of small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans and service-disabled veterans through loans, surety bonding,

- and franchising;
 - (ii) ensuring achievement of the pre-established Federal contracting goals for small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans and service-disabled veterans through expanded mentor-protégé assistance and matching such small business concerns with contracting opportunities;
 - (iii) increasing the integrity of certifications of status as a small business concern owned and controlled by a veteran or service-disabled veteran;
 - (iv) reducing paperwork and administrative burdens on veterans in accessing business development and entrepreneurship opportunities;
 - (v) increasing and improving training and counseling services provided to small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans; and
 - (vi) making other improvements relating to the support for veterans business development by the Federal government; and
- (c) not later than 1 year after its first meeting and annually thereafter, forward to the President a report on the performance of its functions, including any proposals developed pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

Sec. 4. General Provisions.

- (a) The Small Business Administration shall provide funding and administrative support for the Task Force to the extent permitted by law and within existing appropriations.
- (b) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise effect:
- (i) authority granted by law to an executive department, agency, or the head thereof; and
 - (ii) functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.
- (c) Insofar as the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended (5 U.S.C. App.) (FACA), may apply to the Task Force, any functions of the President under the FACA, except for those in section 6 of the FACA, shall be performed by the Administrator in accordance with guidelines issued by the Administrator of General Services.
- (d) This order is not intended to and does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA

Appendix A - BLS Products with Characteristics of Veterans

1. The Employment Situation of Veterans news release

<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf> provides analysis, highlights and data tables using annual average data. There are annual average data available about employment and unemployment by gender, by race, by Hispanic ethnicity, by age, by educational attainment, by occupation, by industry, and by class of worker (private sector, public sector, self-employed). Click on the hyperlinks below to see the contents of each table.

- [Table 1. Employment status of persons 18 years and over by veteran status, period of service, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2014 annual averages](#)
- [Table 2A. Employment status of persons 18 years and over by veteran status, age, and period of service, 2014 annual averages](#)
- [Table 2B. Employment status of men 18 years and over by veteran status, age, and period of service, 2014 annual averages](#)
- [Table 2C. Employment status of women 18 years and over by veteran status, age, and period of service, 2014 annual averages](#)
- [Table 3. Employment status of persons 25 years and over by veteran status, period of service, and educational attainment, 2014 annual averages](#)
- [Table 4. Employed persons 18 years and over by occupation, sex, veteran status, and period of service, 2014 annual averages](#)
- [Table 5. Employed persons 18 years and over by industry, class of worker, sex, veteran status, and period of service, 2014 annual averages](#)
- [Table 6A. Employment status of veterans 18 years and over by state, 2014 annual averages](#)
- [Table 6B. Employment status of nonveterans 18 years and over by state, 2014 annual averages](#)

Appendix A (continued) - BLS Products with Characteristics of Veterans

Also, the Employment Situation of Veterans news release provides data collected as part of a supplemental survey of veterans collected in one month of the year. This veteran supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) provides data about veterans with a service-connected disability, veterans who are current or past members of the Reserve or National Guard, and location of service (Iraq, Afghanistan). Click on the hyperlinks below to see the contents of each table:

- [Table 7. Employment status of veterans 18 years and over by presence of service-connected disability, reported disability rating, period of service, and sex, August 2014, not seasonally adjusted](#)
 - [Table 8. Employed persons 18 years and over by veteran status, presence of service-connected disability, period of service, and class of worker, August 2014, not seasonally adjusted](#)
 - [Table 9. Employment status of Gulf War-era veterans by Reserve or National Guard status, August 2014, not seasonally adjusted](#)
 - [Table 10. Employment status of Gulf War-era II veterans 18 years and over by location of service, August 2014, not seasonally adjusted](#)
2. Each month the Employment Situation news release <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf> provides the national unemployment rate and other labor force statistics. In table 5 of this news release, BLS publishes veteran employment and unemployment statistics by sex and period of service. <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t05.htm>
 3. Data tables are available online that show the employment status of persons 18 years and over by veterans status, age, and sex.
 - Annual table: <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat48.pdf>
 - Quarterly table: http://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpsee_e19.pdf
 - Monthly table: <http://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseea40.pdf>

Appendix A (continued) - BLS Products with Characteristics of Veterans

4. BLS has a subject page on the website that have links to veteran data available in news releases, tables, charts, articles and other related items:
<http://www.bls.gov/cps/demographics.htm#vets>
5. There are several unpublished tables that provide veteran data, sometimes at a more detailed level than is published. These unpublished internal BLS tables are made available upon request. However, the data user should understand that some of the statistics may be based on a very small number of veterans in the survey sample and thus the resulting statistics may or may not be representative of the group. (The data have not been reviewed to ensure that there is sufficient sample size to make the statistics meaningful.) However, unpublished tables are available by duration of unemployment, by employment and unemployment in states, by veterans with multiple periods of service, by full or part-time employment, by school enrollment status, and by voluntary and involuntary part time during the survey reference week.