U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON
VETERANS SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

PUBLIC MEETING

THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 2016
9:00 A.M.

Recorded by: Jen Metcalf-Razzino, CER

CONTENTS

PAGE:

Opening Remarks/Roll Call/IATF Updates 3
    - Douglas Kramer

OVBD Updates
    - Barb Carson 7

Agri-business Policy for Veteran Owned Small Business
    - Lanan Baccam, USDA 71
    - Jamie Critelli, Farmer Veteran Coalition 78

Public Comments/Discussions 92

Agency/Veteran Service Organization Reports 96

Closing Comments 125

PROCEEDINGS

Meeting called to order, 9:07 a.m.

MR. KRAMER: Okay, well, let’s get started. A reminder to sort of — the members of the Task Force and the rest of the folks here in the room, these proceedings are transcribed for permanent record. So, if at any time you’re asked to identify yourself, spell your name, do any of that, please cooperate with the stenographer so that she can keep up without developing cramps in her hands.

My name is Doug Kramer. I’m the Deputy Administrator here at the Small Business Administration. As I explained to Barb on the way down, I am significantly under the weather this morning, which is disappointing because this is one of four decent days we’ve had in DC all year, weather-wise. It shouldn’t be too much of a problem for me with this morning’s meeting, but it is a long meeting, so if at some point I get up and leave for a few minutes to collect myself, it’s not because of anything you’ve said; it’s more where I’m coming from this morning.

I’m going to provide just a 10,000-foot overview of where I think we are and what we’re going to try and do today before I turn it over to Barb to help me run the meeting. And that is really to say this is the fourth one of these quarterly meetings that I have been able to chair since I was confirmed almost exactly a year ago as Deputy Administrator at SBA. And early in that tenure, when I sat down with Barb and the folks her on her team, we identified a number of things that needed to be done with regard to the task force, and I’m very happy to report that a lot of that has been accomplished successfully.

We were significantly in arrears with regard to the required annual reporting that we needed to do. We were as many as three years behind on that. I’m happy to report that the final and current report is now back in our hands after an interagency clearance process that it has emerged in sufficient form that it should be able to go forward.

I am committing to everybody in this room on the record that we will finalize our review here at SBA within the next month and get that published by the middle of July, at which point we will be caught up and then we can start the process for, you know, the 2016 report.

In addition to that, the membership of the Task Force was not where it should be. We had fallen
behind on making sure that we had sufficient VSO
participation on the Task Force. We rectified that,
and I think almost immediately recognized the value
that our current crop of VSO representatives, in
particular, have brought to the Task Force. So, we
very much appreciate that.

So, with the technical stuff done, that
doesn’t get anybody a job or doesn’t help anybody open
a business. So, now we get to turn the business of
continuing to make sure that we are creating a
conducive business environment for veterans to open
small businesses, to succeed in growing small
businesses. And that’s where I think we get to one of
the more important things that we will do as a group,
and that is addressing and now revising the existing
recommendations that this Task Force has created and
worked from.

Over the course of the last couple of months,
with the cooperation -- the good cooperation -- of a
lot of you, we have looked at the 19 existing
recommendations, and we have made recommendations about
the recommendations as to whether or not they should
continue and whether they should be revised or whether
they should be tabled for the time being. This isn’t
necessarily a determination that issues are no longer
important or issues have been successfully completed
and never have to be addressed again. It’s more an
evaluation of where is the best strategic use of our
time and effort over the next year or so.

So, today, I think we will look at the
existing recommendations, sort of try to finalize the
judgments that have been made about those, and then
sort of set the table for what happens next. And I
think between now and the next quarterly meeting, as
Barb will talk about, we will sort of assess where we
are with the existing recommendations and then have a
conversation over the next couple of months about what
new recommendations we’ll put in and we’ll sort of
advance those efforts.

So, that’s what we’re going to try and do
today, as well as have comments from most of you and
some time for public comments as well. But with that,
I appreciate your presence here today. Do we want to
go around the room and take roll and have people
identify themselves, and then we’ll catch up on that as
folks come in. But why don’t we take the roll and then
after that I’ll let Barb sort of lead us from there.

So, Amanda, do you want to start, and then
we’ll just go around the room.

MS. BAINTON: Amanda Bainton, the Military
We also lost one, so New York and New Jersey had a Veteran Business Outreach Center, and that one is currently open for competition if you know of great folks working with veteran entrepreneurs that would be eligible, please let us know. And that is open until July 3rd.

Moving to Boots to Business, another training program that you have heard me brief on before, a quick update. Here, the first ever outcome survey is complete. The analysis is done. We have not yet released the report. We’re making the final edits and making it pretty, but I can tell you that it’s encouraging. With a high level of confidence, we can tell you that about 35 percent of people who have taken Boots to Business have established a business. And that’s rather high for what we had expected to see.

We learned a lot more about what kinds of things they did after, where else did they connect to get further assistance, what’s the age, what’s the demographic. So, I look forward to sharing that in more detail with you in our September meeting. And I’ll send that out in advance to our members and also post it on our website so anyone can see it, but we will go over it in the next meeting.

Thus far, 42,000 service members and military family members have attended Boots to Business. This is the most significant increase in outreach to veterans that SBA has ever had, and I’m grateful for the support that we’ve received through our transition assistance partners.

And, finally, I wanted to remind you that your communities and your folks are always connecting with us on the ground locally, and that’s important.

Diversity of what aspiring entrepreneurs hear is very valuable to us. We, therefore, grant, not just to the Veteran Business Outreach Centers, but to women’s business centers, small business development centers, SCORE, and we leverage our district offices. We let two instructors -- we reimburse them to teach so that they can hear different perspectives as they evaluate whether small business ownership is a vocation that they would choose.

And then next is Reboot, Boots to Business curriculum for those who have already transitioned out of the military and are civilians. Or, it works better with their schedule. Whatever it may be, they can attend Reboot. And I’ll give you an update on those numbers shortly.

We’re in our final year of supporting a woman veteran training program known as V-WISE, Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship. In the next 12 months, you’ll see programs in San Antonio, Phoenix, and Savannah. I definitely would like our interagency partners to be aware of that, and let me know how we can connect with you locally in those places to reach women veterans and female military spouses.

We have just concluded the last year in a grant for service-disabled training. You’ve heard me talk about entrepreneurship boot camp for veterans with disabilities and intensive programs for service-disabled vets that were onsite. We have opened up this opportunity. It’s currently open through June 19th to organizations that are currently providing entrepreneurship training to service-disabled veterans.

I would also love for you to put that out through your networks. The maximum grant amount is $150,000; minimum $50,000. And the total award possible is $300,000. We will award that and make the announcement by August.

And, finally, Veterans Institute for Procurement, that has been of interest to this group. We are entering the final program year with them. Huge development just a couple of months ago was the first ever new curriculum, VIP Start. We had been doing the standard VIP, which we call now VIP Grow, that was for existing businesses that already have revenue, past performance, and a certain number of employees. VIP Start is still -- you can’t just be coming off the street thinking about a business plan and you’re going to go into federal contracting first.

It’s not that. If you’ve at least been a sub; you’ve got revenue; and this is your full-time vocation. You’re not doing it as a side gig.

The feedback was incredible. I obviously won’t have performance results on it for a year to see what was a meaningful difference for these businesses, but we feel strongly enough that it was a good start that in this final program year of this grant we will have one more Start program, two of the Grow, and the first ever VIP International. It will not be just OCONUS contracting. It’s going to be about exporting, as well, and how to work overseas.

We have obviously as veterans some -- many of us have experience living overseas, working in different cultures. Those are important qualities to bring to this kind of business. So, if anyone has input and you would like to say what goes into the VIP International curriculum, I’m happy to take that on because we want to learn from you some best practices.
or things you wish that folks who contract with you
OCONUS would want to know.

Next slide. I’m going to dive into Boots to
Business. You do have these slides in front of you,
and members on the line, we can send this to you so
that you can see it. I’m not -- it’s a tough chart to
read, but I just want to tell you we’re on track as we
anticipated, that Boots to Business continues to grow.

Boots to Business Reboot in communities, we’ve had
significant activity in the last part of the calendar
year, a little slower right after the holidays, and
we’re picking up at high speed through the summer.

Virtual curriculum, thanks to the support of
Department of Defense, is also available for those who
cannot attend a brick-and-mortar class. Though we
highly recommend it, I’m pleased that we have a virtual
option. Next slide.

The eight-week attendance. Briefly, the
eight-week is a follow-on to the two-day course. It is
at least 10 hours a week. It’s intensive, college-
level course. One could argue that transition is not
the time that one would undertake an endeavor, so two
messages on that. One, you can take it anytime after
you’ve graduated. And, second, that transition is now
open at any point in a service person’s career, and
they can take it early, and so can spouses.

The graduation rate is around 50 percent,
which is outstanding for a massively open online
course. Next slide.

A little more on Reboot. You can see we’ve
served over 1,200 as of the -- April of this year in 91
courses. It kind of mirrors the attendance rates that
we see for Boots to Business, just under 20, which
makes for a great discussion. And, also, we’ve learned
it’s fantastic for bringing in community folks that are
already running businesses, local banks, and if there’s
a veteran that’s going to stay in the area, this is a
really meaningful connection to make, some networking
in addition to education. Very pleased.

The American Legion has partnered with us for
several of these, and I look forward to continuing
that. Davy Leghorn happens to be representing them
today. I’ll tell you we’ve got Guam and American Samoa
coming up this summer, and we definitely want to engage
your chapters there. Next slide.

Here we are on where we needed to serve more
service members becoming civilians and their military
spouses. Hawaii will also cover Guam and the islands
and territories in that area. MiraCosta College is
south, close to Camp Pendleton. Cochise College is in
Southern Arizona, next to Fort Huachuca, where there’s
a lot of cyber and drone potential, already some VCs
from up in Phoenix and other incubators are interested
in traveling south and working with this VBOC.

The University of Texas at Arlington, as many
of you know, this is a dense population for veterans
and service members and active duty installations. We
feel a lot better knowing that now we have two Veteran
Business Outreach Centers in Texas.

Georgia Southern University will help us serve
Georgia. A lot of activity there. And the Center for
Women in Enterprise, it’s a women’s business center,
will be collocated. They don’t serve just women. The
name is misleading. They serve all, and there will be
a separate Veteran Business Outreach Center.

It says Rhode Island. That is where the
sponsoring organization is located; however, we expect
that they will have more than one location in New
England.

And, finally, I already mentioned that they’ll
be up and running on July 1st. If you’d like any of
your local folks to be invited to these grand openings
so we can make the connection early, I think that would
be a fantastic thing for us to do. Next slide.

Coverage map of all that we have in place
right now. And as I said, we’ll be adding one for New
York and New Jersey shortly. Next slide.

I wanted to highlight that the Veteran
Business Outreach Centers, we have learned so much
about their performance, the consistency that we have
across the field, and places where we don’t have that.
So, we are working to standardize our programs a bit,
make sure that one veteran will -- a veteran can get
the same service, no matter which Veteran Business
Outreach Center they go to, especially when they’re
such a mobile population. And they may touch one first
at their active duty installation and then go home.

And we also wanted to refocus on public law’s
intent for this. It was to serve transitioning service
members and their families; therefore, we have made it,
in their grant, mandatory that they will serve at 100
percent of the Boots to Business given within the state
they’re located and half for all outside their state.

As I said earlier in the presentation, we
value diversity, and they -- we reimburse to have at
least two instructors for every module so we’ll
continue to get Small Business Development Center,
SCORE, woman’s business centers and business owners in
their next to the VBOC, but they really need to be
involved in this program.
They’ll also be leading Boots to Business.

Reboot and continuing whatever the special thing was that made them attractive to us to partner with them.

Each of them has a speciality that they’re really good at. Some are in the auto industry and supply chain; others are fantastic at federal procurement; others are well connected within their states and their states are fantastic for small business and have incentives. So, we don’t want to lose that special, unique quality, but they’ll do a little less of that and focus first on transition.

And, finally, the performance measures, we should be clear about exactly how we’ll know we’re successful. I want to see that they’re -- that businesses have worked with a VBOC are getting capital infusion, either debt or equity, that they are acquiring contracts, whether it’s federal, state, local, or private sector, and that they’re creating or retaining jobs.

Finally, as I mentioned, I want consistent quality across the Veteran Business Outreach Center program. Like the other resource partners at SBA, they should have offerings that are consistent. And, so, we are finding out what are the best offerings there, and we will provide them across the board and really build our VBOC as a community instead of independent operators as they have been in the past. Next slide.

I’m going to touch a little bit on contracting. And later in the presentation today, Ken Dodds will be joining us, but I did want you to know I’m grateful for our colleagues in advocacy and government contracting and business development. Many discussions over the last three months on what more we can do for the service-disabled veteran small business program and veterans in general. Thanks in great part to Max Kidalov and your presentation last meeting, it drove some great discussion. I won’t say it’s all in the same place, but we know we’re really working through what we would want different and why. And -- thank you. And on capital, we are putting money in, that there will be at least two accelerators that are focused on veteran businesses in this SBA’s Accelerator Prize Competition that will be released this summer, and we’re excited about that. We want veterans to be in all the things that SBA is doing, and this is -- I’m grateful to our leadership for recognizing that and putting some power behind it. We’ll talk about lending in a moment as well. Next slide.

Last year was incredible. If we -- we increased our 7(a) lending by 100 percent between 14 to 15 for veteran-owned small business. I thought we’d be lucky to stay steady. Well, we’ve done more than that. We’ve grown even this year. So, you can see in both units of loans, the number of loans we’ve put out and also in dollars, we are ahead. This is through Quarter 2 of Fiscal 16. I have more detailed slides that I can share with you, but that for now is my good new story. Next slide.

And, finally, we’re going to move, as Deputy Administrator Kramer mentioned, into recommendations. Sure. Sorry, I didn’t take a break. I’ll breathe for a moment. Do we have any questions or comments on the updates so far?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Okay, good, because this is the meat of this meeting. This is why we’re here. I am incredibly grateful to our partners and members here on this Task Force. The subcommittees hadn’t met in my tenure here at SBA. You have put in more time, and your talent and attention to the work before us than ever before. And it has made a significant difference. You really helped us visualize now where have we been successful, what is left to do. And that’s the discussion we’re going to have this morning.

For The Record, Inc.  
(301) 870-8025 - www.ftrinc.net - (800) 921-5555
Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development

6/9/2016

see the broad categories here are access to capital is
first, then counseling and training, then government
contracting, and finally other or research. We’ve made
significant strides in access to capital and training,
a little more work to do on both government contracting
and the research that we need to make better decisions
about how to serve veteran business going forward.
Next slide.

So, as I said, the subcommittee did meet via
e-mail quite often and on the phone twice since the last
meeting to discuss how we would assess these
recommendations and decide which ones we could double
down and put more effort into and which ones may be
ready and ripe for closeout.
And here’s how we decided whether we would
recommend closure of a recommendation. Was there a
public law that now is in place and addresses the
recommendation? Or regulatory implementation? Was a
program created and funded that addresses it? Or an
agency policy that is enduring? Or an in-practice
program, something that we could say is ongoing but
exists. Next slide.

From the top, and for those who are here from
the public, you’re welcome to -- I believe we have some
slides on the side, and if you need anything afterward,
applicability of the program to veteran businesses. It
will continue. It’s in place. Therefore, we recommend
closure. Comments on recommendation two?

MS. CARSON: Okay, recommendation three,
increase awareness, access, and utilization of
microloans in the veteran-owned small business
community. This has been an area that SBA continues to
pay attention to and needs to do more work upon, not
just for veterans, but for all portfolios. It’s
something that I’ve already had multiple discussions,
the last one just yesterday with the Office of Capital
Access on what we can do, how fast, and the followup
meeting is next week.

We do have lenders who are very interested in
helping us address this, specifically for veterans, and
we are trying to more closely align and become aware of
additional organizations that are already doing this
out in their communities and making sure that we find
ways to work with them. Recommend keeping it open.

MR. KRAMER: So, I’m going to step in very
briefly here. I’m going to assume that Barb has done
her homework and a lot of these recommendations will
not necessarily bring about -- although feel free if
you have an objection and want to take a different

I’m happy to send it to you. We will also post this,
along with the transcript, on our website so that you
can review it. And please don’t feel, as Deputy
Administrator Kramer said, that this finishes the
discussion forever. If you weren’t here today, you
don’t have something to say, no, we’ll be doing this,
we’ll be talking about it in September again. Not
quite as much detail then.

So, recommendation number one was leverage new
and existing lending commitments to increase access to
capital for veterans and service-disabled veteran-owned
small businesses. This was primarily SBA’s, and we
have achieved this through a lending pledge, the
Veterans Advantage lending program, which is primarily
fee relief, as we’ve seen marked improvement in access
to capital, at least in the larger dollar amounts
beyond the microloan level. So, we recommend closure.
Are there any comments at this time on that
one?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Recommendation number two was
increased contracting opportunities for veteran-owned
small business through the SBA’s Office of Surety
Guarantees. We have addressed it. We’re doing more
outreach about the availability of that program and the
opinion. What I’d also encourage you to do, because if
you look at the numbers up front -- Barb sort of gave
away the ending, there are a good number of these
recommendations that we don’t expect will continue, but
we do expect that we’ll come up with new
recommendations to take their place. And like I
suggested, I think sometime between now and September
we will mold those into shape.

So, as we’re talking about any of these
recommendations, if they -- even if you don’t want to
object to us -- the recommendation to close it or keep
it open, if there is something that is tangentially
sort of related to that that comes to mind that you do
want to put on the table for us to talk about as maybe
what one of the new recommendations would be, feel free
to interject that as well, even if you’re not
specifically objecting to the recommendation about the
existing recommendation, nothing that holds together.
We’ll check it in the transcript later.

MS. CARSON: For number four, you’ll see -- I
forgot to mention this one of the other options that we
had, where we recommend closure but perhaps a pivot,
that the topic itself broadly still needs attention,
however, the sub-recommendations have been addressed
appropriately and are, therefore, eligible to be
The subcommittee has recommended that we do more work on the development of those tools and training on how to use those systems and outreach so that businesses are aware that they exist and could be useful to them. Any comments from the subcommittee members?

Okay. If you have a question, please come to the table with a microphone, or there’s a microphone near you.

MR. WYNN: Good morning. Joe Wynn, VET-Force. I was just going to ask what were the government-wide tools that were referenced, since you’re closing this? There were some government-wide tools. Do you have a list of them or something like that?

MS. CARSON: GSA or one of my OSDBUs, would you like to speak? Thank you.

MR. FERRARO: Sure.

MS. CARSON: Thank you.

MR. FERRARO: This is an area GSA is very involved in, and I was going to mention that later, but necessarily a tool, but it’s a program that’s going to make quite a difference for veteran business.

Within DOD, and our representative can absolutely speak if I’ve missed anything, but the MaxPrac methodology was a tool generated to help small business market overview and assist in market research. Also, the Market Research Center of Excellence and Better Buying Power for DOD.

So, DOD, did I miss anything that you’d want to bring forward?

MR. JACKSON: No, ma’am, you covered it.

MS. CARSON: Thanks. Anything for VA you’d want us to hit on?

MR. LENEY: I don’t want to speak for DOD, but we’re working with DOD. We’ve invested and partnered with them on the development of a market research tool that -- I will defer to my DOD colleague to talk about when that might be completed.

MR. JACKSON: Yeah, so, just as Mr. Leney just stated, this is Shannon Jackson, yes, we are rolling out the Market Research Center of Excellence to come up here in the next couple of months. This will help, one, DOD have better oversight on the different socioeconomic categories, where we’re performing well at, where we need help at, and then look at some of the things, opportunities to help increase -- to increase opportunities for the small business community. So, this is one of the big initiatives of the Better Buying Power 3.0 that DOD will be rolling out in partnership with the VA.

MS. CARSON: Thank you.

MR. FERRARO: Let me add a couple of things as well from a GSA government-wide perspective, and I can’t speak for -- of course for Office of Federal Procurement Policy, but big initiatives since the start of this Task Force are our Acquisition Gateway, which is open to the public, which provides a lot of information for -- it’s primarily geared towards government folks, but it’s also a good source of information.

And the shift to category management I think addresses the supplier-based requirements and industry -- it’s more geared internal to where the Government is actually spending and in that sense, but I think that’s a type of tool that is helping the Government buy smarter and it can get better data to see where there’s areas of -- that can be expanded to service-disabled and veteran-owned businesses.

MR. KRAMER: And, again, to sort of put this in context, I think the understanding coming out of our
work on this is that with this recommendation, coupled with that there are some very big, broad-based tools that we’ve come up with, the need at this point is not to develop new ones but to make sure these are sustainable, that we’re doing training on them, that we’re making sure people are aware of what’s already available, and that’s really where the opportunity is right now.

So, our sense is that when we start drafting new recommendations this will evolve more into a training and outreach effort on those programs.

MS. CARSON: Thank you. Moving to recommendation number five, maximize the impact of recent funding to increase small business lending by strengthening coordination between the Department of Treasury and the SBA district offices. We do have a Treasury representative on the line. We do recommend that this is closed. The SSBCI funds were allocated several years ago and have continued to be expended. Is there anything else you would like to add, Treasury?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Okay, we’ll move on if there are no comments from anyone in the room for closure of number five.

For six, increase and augment entrepreneurship and technical assistance programs offered to veterans.

We just spent the first about 10 minutes of the -- this program talking about those entrepreneurial development programs from SBA, and we also have many efforts across agencies to provide through mostly OSDBU offices other training programs.

Our VSOs are also partnered with us, who happen -- many of those members are here today, so we do believe that this is an ongoing activity. It has -- it’s in law and it’s in practice, and we believe it can be closed. It’s something we will continue to develop and improve upon, but we have met the intent.

MR. KRAMER: This is one, and we can maybe put a pin in here and come back to it later, but this strikes me as one where I think I am comfortable and I think our recommendation here suggests that we are comfortable with sort of where Boots to Business is, where Reboot is, all of that.

But I think when we think about the specific support we are providing, whether it’s a question about VBOCs, whether it’s a question about how we coordinate on an interagency to make sure that we’re providing those resources, I mean, I think all you have to do is look at the map at the VBOCs and realize that, you know, we provide nationwide coverage but it’s not always right next door where it needs to be.

So, I might sort of put a mark that us thinking about where this need evolves to with our next recommendation would be a good item for discussion as we go forward, that the way we wrote this recommendation I think we’ve done, but I think there’s a larger need out here in this area, so...

MR. LENNEY: Doug, just one additional comment. I think this has been a great success story by SBA, and I know at least from the VA perspective our approach has been to collaborate with the SBA to enable you guys to do what you do very well. And I would just point out to our non-governmental partners here on the interagency task force, the key element to this is going to be funding.

This is a -- and I can say this because I’m not part of the program, but I’m certainly -- my agency’s a beneficiary of the program and the veterans we support are beneficiaries, but this is a program that’s just worthy of expansion. And the only way it gets expanded is if the SBA gets more funds for it.

And I would argue that rather than other agencies trying to do what the SBA does well badly that we continue to focus these kinds of development programs in the SBA, in the VBOCs, because it works.

And I get that a lot as I travel around the country and talk to veteran small businesses, and we have -- it’s caused us -- this partnership has caused us to refocus on access, not be spending resources trying to replicate poorly what you guys are doing.

So, I would give a shout out to SBA, but this is the kind of thing, I wonder if VIP is going to survive; I wonder if the VBOCs are going to survive; and we’ve all -- those of us who’ve been inside the Beltway for a while realize that there’s lot of great programs that wither and die because they’re not the latest and greatest thing. So, for what it’s worth.

MS. CARSON: Thank you for that. Moving to seven, really specific recommendation, improve information to exiting service members and their spouses by revising Transition Assistance Program to include information on entrepreneurship and business ownership resources. We believe that is in practice, in law, and this recommendation can be closed.

For recommendation eight, another that we propose closure and perhaps a pivot and look forward to input on what that pivot might be. Ease the navigation and create or leverage an existing web portal that allows veterans to access entrepreneurship resources from across the Government. This was originally done...
with BusinessUSA. There are other portals that exist. There’s much discussion over whether there should be one door or there’s no wrong door for, you know, any topic that you may have related to an activity. So, this one, we believe that we’ve met the intent through BusinessUSA but are looking for more input on what would be best going forward. Hearing nothing, I’ll move on to recommendation nine. The text got smaller, good luck. Find and reduce barriers that impede service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses from contracting with the U.S. Government. We believe that this, especially after the presentation last month and other conditions, that we’d like to keep this open.

For recommendation ten, reduce regulatory burdens by offering comment to agencies as they conduct their regulatory look-back analysis under Executive Order 13563, which is called “Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review.” We propose closing this, however, a pivot, and I’ll turn to our representative from OMB for comment.

MR. BLUM: Thanks, Barb. This -- the recommendation, which I think of the suite that we have is the one that’s probably the most directly focused on our regulatory activities at large is obviously one that the Task Force needs to continue to be paying close attention to because regulations, as we all know, are one way in which we can create unintended barriers to entry.

The executive order that’s identified here is designed to ensure that agencies on an ongoing basis as part of their regulatory programs are continually evaluating their regulations that they’re responsible for to make sure that they are necessary and effective and efficient.

So, in suggesting that we close this, I think really what we’re wanting to do is to try to maybe tailor this more specifically to a suite of actions that can focus and maybe this, by the way, dovetails with number nine, in ways that we can reduce barriers to entry, simplify processes, increase access for new entrants and perhaps even broaden the conversation.

So one, we want to maintain the regulatory discussion. And one thing that I mentioned, I believe to the Task Force before but worth mentioning is OMB has worked with the Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council to require that at the beginning of each of the preambles to new rules, in addition to the regulatory flexibility analysis that’s required by law to make sure that we’re looking at alternatives for small businesses, we’re also specifically speaking to any sort of considerations that we’re taking if we’re going to apply new requirements to commercial item acquisitions, COTS acquisitions, or small acquisitions under the simplified acquisition threshold.

Those are three spaces where small businesses play a very significant role, and we want to make sure that there is complete transparency and understanding if we’re going to, you know, apply new requirements in that space. Oftentimes, they’re congressionally mandated, but many times they’re not, and we recognize that we need to be clear and make sure that we’re engaging with the public in a more regular basis in those conversations. So, that may be one way in which we can, you know, think of a recommendation where we can -- times provide input to the FAR Council more directly.

On the legislative front, I’ve many times mentioned our interest in looking at opportunities for process simplification, reducing barriers, and I’m happy to say that not only -- I think last time I told you the administration submitted a suite of acquisition reform proposals to Congress, which included raising the SAT to $500,000, creating on a pilot basis an innovation set-aside that would allow new entrants to come in and be able to sell to the Government without having to compete in a full and open competition against well established companies, provided that they had some new innovative products or services that would meet government needs. And Senator Carper has proposed an amendment for incorporation into the Senate NDAA with those and several other proposals.

So, I know we’ve discussed these, and I’m hoping that we will do more of that in engaging with Congress. I think at times that the fact that Congress hasn’t acted is probably because we hadn’t been proactive enough in making recommendations.

A third on the innovation side, I mentioned that we issued a guidance document to encourage agencies to identify acquisition innovation advocates and to establish labs with the idea of creating pathways for contracting officers to feel empowered to use new and innovative practices that may be streamlined, easier to reach small businesses and other businesses offering innovative solutions.

SBA has stood up an idea lab that was very actively engaged in substantial transformation of the SBAOne program, which as you all know is used to help support certification and other representation requirements that small businesses have to make in some
of those programs and using new practices like Agile Acquisition and whatnot was able to get a minimum -- a viable product on the street to meet the agencies’ needs in a much shorter period of time, maybe half the time that they otherwise would have if they had gone through a traditional practice. I believe the work was awarded to a small business. HHS had a similar result, so I think there’s a space in the innovation -- in innovation land.

And, finally, in communications, because we all often find that just the lack of us being responsive to the community itself creates a very big barrier to entry and discourages companies from wanting to participate for understandable reasons. We started to do this, but, you know, maybe something around the

MR. BLUM: I think -- you know, again, I think very much interested in my colleagues’ thoughts on this, but, you know, maybe something around the emergent technology space. I’m not trying to -- this would dovetail with, like, SBR and STTR, but we have, for example, in the cyberspace and in digital acquisition, every agency is trying to improve their capacity to be able to -- as part of a 21st Century government, be able to perform, you know, digital and provide digital services to citizens and similarly to be able to get rapid access to emerging technologies that we need to be, you know, fighting or cyber of those spaces, over and over again, any problems.

Both of those spaces, over and over again, any agency I’ve spoken to, not only do they talk about the need to be able to do this better, but they’ve also talked about the fact that there are small businesses out there that can provide a lot of these types of technologies.

And, so, while I’m not being 100 percent responsive, I think if we can create something in this space of emerging technologies that ties to digital, that ties to emerging technologies, it also gives us an opportunity to be very specific around showing how the activities are helping the Government meet priorities that the administration and the taxpayers know we need to get accomplished.

MR. KRAMER: Right, I think that’s absolutely perfect. And then one of the things we should be thinking about, I think the next round of recommendations should have sort of -- continue to have some of the systemic, you know, wide-ranging, you know, changing programs, but also some very narrow focused ones. And I think, you know, the more I’ve had conversations specifically about, you know, the cyberspace, because there’s clearly going to be a sustained economic opportunity in that space,

 especially in relation to the Federal Government.

There is also -- there are also a lot of people coming out of service that have been working in that space and have acquired some good expertise in that space.

Now, how do we certify that expertise so it is acknowledged and given credit in the private sector and maybe also then in contracting actions, you know, and how we can create a fast track, which would really benefit an agency -- we need all the cyber expertise and IT expertise we can get in this building. And, so, the more that we could, you know, verify the ability, have that certified from their service, create a fast track for those people either as employees or as contractors to work with us, create something like that, that’s -- I can’t say the word win on enough sides of that issue to describe how well that would work.

So, you know, as we think about the next recommendations, identifying opportunities like that, which really would require the sort of interagency approach, you know, we would have to work with you all on the contracting side of it, our friends at DOD would have to work with us probably on the certification side of that, you know, along with VA. So, I take that as a
very good point and an example of something we might work on today and over the course of the next couple of months.

MR. FERRARO: And GSA recognizes that as well across the board for small businesses, and we’re working on several programs in conjunction with OMB to speed up that process and piloting it in our IT area as an example.

MR. BLUM: You guys have been doing a lot of work in FedRAMP, for example, and getting those businesses certified. And the whole nature of supply chain risk management, you know, small businesses are part of that and, you know, how they can, you know, engage more effectively and not be fearful of the fact of getting excluded because of the fact that it seems to complicated is a great space for us to deal with that.

MR. FERRARO: The other issue, and it may just be confusion on my part, that I think is wroth in this regulatory area is the whole idea of the certification of a veteran-owned business and service-disabled business. I get a lot of questions from ex-service members or how do I certify and things along those lines. So, I think it may just be a lack of information or it may be – it would be nice if there was one policy or rule across the board.

MR. KRAMER: I’m trying to cultivate conversation here. I’m not going to allow people jumping three recommendations ahead; however, so we’ll get to that – we’ll get to that with recommendation 14.

MR. JACKSON: From DOD’s perspective, one of the initiatives that OSBP has put in place as a result of one of the GAO deals is we have like, you know, for the small businesses, we’ve developed a quick fact sheet for the small business community to look at and at least prepare themselves for the cyber requirements and actually doing business with DOD.

So, it is on our business defense site, a quick reference or a fact -- two-page fact sheet, just for information for the small business community. So, that’s one of the things that DOD is really trying to push, as well. So, just an insert there.

MS. CARSON: Thank you for that contribution and robust discussion. It really gives us a positive way forward. Moving to recommendation 11, coordinate and centralize information on veteran and service-disabled veteran-owned small business contracting opportunities across the Federal Government. We believe that that one still needs attention.

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. Also, we believe that one continues to need attention.

Recommendation 13, increase collaboration on federal contracting opportunities between national veterans’ advocacy groups and SBA’s Office of Veteran Business Development. Although we have done work here, there’s more to do. We can never have a large enough table, and so we’d like to keep this one open.

Recommendation 14, we recommend a closure but a pivot on developing a streamlined, efficient, and clear certification process to be used by veterans and service-disabled veteran-owned business in federal procurement.

MR. FERRARO: Here’s where I’ll chime in. We have centralized across the Federal Government, and it’s the system that I own in my current role at GSA, System for Award Management, SAM. And through OMB’s urging, we’re expanding that to be on just contracting and the grants community is starting to use SAM as the authoritative source for entity information.

And the confusion I see is because I own SAM and when I get questions from veterans, I send them to SAM and say, oh, it’s a self-certification, this is all you need to do, you know, check the block, et cetera. But then it’s a different process with different agencies, and I’m not familiar with that. Those are an additional certification, I think, specifically for the VA that I’m aware of, and there may be others that I’m not aware of. No? Well, maybe it’s misinformation on my part, then.

MR. KRAMER: You’re not wrong.

MR. FERRARO: I’m not wrong, oh, okay. And, so -- and that’s what I tell folks. I said, you know, or folks being the veterans that are asking me questions. So, I think that’s an area that we should either streamline or standardize or trust the veterans to do the right thing and just do away with it.

But there’s entire industries out there, and I’m not trying to take away from small businesses, but there are small businesses that help other small businesses get a certification, which kind of troubles me a little bit because I deal with that on the SAM side of the house where there’s businesses out there that help businesses register in SAM and try and take money that they don’t really need to. It’s free, but if it’s too difficult where you need somebody to help you with it, then we on the Federal Government -- we’re
doing something wrong.

MR. KRAMER: And I think this is one that could really benefit, again, from the interagency approach because I think there is -- you know, this is sort of an area that is still in its, you know, if not infancy, adolescence, where I think there is a desire to be able to certify, even if you, you know, the service-disabled, which is a statutorily created program, I mean, that's there's clearly that, but in this other space of giving veterans potentially that certification, which would be an advantage to them, in a way that is true to preventing any sort of fraud with that, but at the same time not being an up-front burden for them and a wall them to climb, as you sort of spelled out. And that's really one of the things we address all the time.

When we -- when I got here, our 8(a) program generally, which deals with all sorts of disadvantage folks, not just service-disabled, is one way you can look at those programs, you know, it was taking people two years, and a lot of them had to pay $20,000 to an outside consultant to get into the program, and that's crazy, because the whole purpose of the program is to take people who need a helping hand.

And, so, we have to -- but at the same time,

if people abuse that program, boy, you get some bad IG findings, a bad GAO report, a bad newspaper article.

So, we -- I think this is something that would very much benefit from all of us having a conversation of where do we get to that point of comfort that we are creating a program that has integrity as more and more agencies might have an interest in doing this but not creating that burden and then meeting everybody's needs in that regard. So, I very much agree, as well, that I think a pivot here and a good conversation about that would be -- would be helpful to everyone, yeah.

MR. WYNN: Joe Wynn again, VET-Force. You know, I have some comments on some of the recommendations, but I'll wait until you get to the end, but on this one in particular, I just really am not understanding why this would be closed because some of the comments you just made and also this -- I think -- first of all, these recommendations came from 2012, 2013, okay, and we still are having issues with the VA verification and also people trying to self-certify, trying to get clarity on which one they should do, certain agencies, should they look at the VA, should they not look at the VA. So, I really don't understand why this is being recommended as being closed.

MR. KRAMER: To be clear, I think the recommendation here is to pivot. I think the recommendation is to close this specific one but to pivot -- basically to rework it because we think that as you sort of pointed out it's a recommendation that was written in 2012. There are sort of different questions, and maybe we have moved from the infancy to the adolescence. So, I think we are generally in agreement that we still need, on an interagency basis, to talk about this, and we plan to do that.

MR. LENEY: I'd reinforce that, Doug, because I think in 2012 we were in a very different place. I would argue that there is a streamlined, efficient, and clear verification process within the VA. It only applies to the VA, so you're correct, Eric. I think the pivot that we're suggesting is a fundamental policy determination of whether or not the Federal Government adopts some kind of a verification program so that all veterans in all agencies that are doing business are on the same footing.

We have 8,600 SDVOSBs and VOSBs in our program. About 2,000 of them do business with the VA. What that indicates to us in our conversations with veterans is there's a large numbers of veterans who feel a utility to being -- to being able to demonstrate that they've been through a rigorous process that demonstrates that they are, in fact, owned and controlled by veterans and they're a real SDVOSB or VOSB.

In our agency, that's important because last year we did $3.7 billion set-aside to veteran-owned small businesses. And as I look at status protests and I look at responses from veterans, there is a growing sense of a double standard. The -- I don't believe self-certification is a viable option because of the risks to the community from those who would argue that there are substantial elements to the community that are not legitimate.

One of the advantages of a rigorous program, which we have, is that we can state with great confidence that the 8,600 firms who are in the program are, in fact, legitimate.

But I will tell you so far in this fiscal year we received over 400 allegations of fraud against veteran-owned small businesses in our program. We investigate them all. Over the course of the last three years, we've done over 2,000 unannounced audits of VOSBs in the program, which is a very high percentage of those businesses.

We've invested millions of dollars in making sure that the people who are -- the firms that are in
that program are legitimate and can be confident and so can be confident as we talk to contracting officers and want to use these businesses that they are, in fact, legitimate.

My concern, and why I argue for the pivot, I agree with you, Joe, that we should not close this, but there’s sort of a fundamental decision that I think this Task Force is a good place to address it, is do we get serious about not only the veteran-owned small business community but the other communities like 8(a) and women, et cetera, so that if we are going to provide economic benefit, particularly procurement preference to these firms, and we say with confidence that they’re the real deal.

When I took this job in 2011, you know, I was facing an IG report from the VA that argued that we had two-and-a-half billion dollars in fraud in the SDVOSB program. My view, that that report was inaccurate, and over the course of the last four years, I can state with great confidence that we don’t have that kind of fraud, but it takes an investment. And one has to ask, particularly for those firms that have been denied and are found to be ineligible in our program, who are doing business with other agencies of the Federal Government on a self-certification basis when the regulations that govern the SBA program and the VA program are essentially the same, that maybe there is a problem that this interagency task force ought to look at, and I think I would look forward to collaborating with GSA, how do we -- how do we make this, you know, the same across government.

MR. KRAMER: So, obviously, I think we’re all in agreement this will be a very robust discussion over the next several months. Victor, I’ll let you go in a minute.

I just want to add two things for food for thought between now and the next meeting for folks who may not deal with this every day as some of us do. The first is to realize that, you know, the real challenge in this is not so much to determine if someone was a vet or not, because that can often be looked up on a computer.

The question is often what role is that certified vet playing in the organization. Are they just sort of a prop? Do they really have control? Do they really see the profit? Or are they just someone that an existing business who has no ties to service are using as a proxy? So, that’s really what you’re trying to figure out here. The other is pretty easy.

And then it becomes this -- you know, you might sit through more of these before we’re done than you’d like to, but there’s a bit of a chicken-and-egg risk analysis. And that’s -- you know, that’s what I have seen a lot of our programs, and we will have to bring to this one, as well.

I will say my experience, coming from outside government to inside the government, at least at this agency, is we had a lot of government officials working in this space who were very, very risk-averse, because if the one IG report came down or the one news story came down, there would be a bit of a witch hunt for who signed off on that company and why did they do it, and that’s the only time that those folks got attention.

And it was negative attention, so they did everything they could to avoid being the focus of that attention.

And that’s where we ended up with in a lot of our 8(a) reviews 18 months having to wait for the certification, mounds of paper that people would have to pull together and all of that, so we’d have to find the right balance between what can we do up front in a way that allows the small business to get up and running but gives us confidence that we’re not going to end up with -- you know, we don’t want to end up with the $2 billion in alleged fraud that actually turns out to be correct, you know, that gives us comfort on that, but then also realizes that there will be both a before and after on this, that you do the investigations, you do the audits on the back side.

You know, the gate may not hold everyone back without, you know, taking too long. And, so, there’s just an operational question there that I think is very ripe for discussion and a lot of consistency across the Federal Government. So, I very much look forward to dealing with this.

So, Victor, did you want to chime in on this?

MR. KLINGELHOFER: Yes. Victor Klingelhofer for VVA. I certainly agree with what you and Tom just discussed here. You know, I also -- when we discussed this in the subcommittee, closing this and pivoting it, I was very much in favor of that because I think we need to look government-wide at the entire certification process for a couple of reasons. And possibly not only for SDVs but, you know, government-wide.

I have seen more and more of these organizations helping people get certified for $20, $30,000. I mean, I remember seeing one, it was on a GSA Schedule contract, where someone charged $120,000.
to a company to get on schedule and they didn’t. We actually had to help them get on Schedule later.

And there is a lot of confusion as to exactly how companies need to self-certify, what they need to do, and I think that the SBA’s efforts in the 8(a) program are excellent, what you’ve done in -- over the last 10 years, 12 years to really speed that up and make it more accurate. It is very good, and I’d like to see that --

MR. KRAMER: Actually, it’s about the last 8 to 12 months. So, Jackie Robinson, who is up in that office, has really transformed it on a dime. I mean, I think there was a lot of good work going on before that, but she’s done a really amazing job that I think is going to have impact across the agency.

MR. KLINGHELDER: No, I agree, and I really look forward to -- where I’m going with all of this is the pivoting, meetings that we will have here to refocus what needs to be done. Thank you.

MR. KIDALOV: Max Kidalov from the Naval Postgraduate School. So, I’d like to offer a couple of comments on the certification issue. I would like to -- for the committee and for you to consider that perhaps the -- of course the integrity and the consistency pieces are important, but also there is another very important piece, which is the branding.

And the branding piece becomes very, very important.

So, yesterday, for example, we heard some presentations in the Advisory Council about, for instance, branding related to agriculture; specifically, veterans involved in agriculture. And there are different -- there’s different value in that.

And I believe that there is value in having a brand. And that is something that would be valuable, I think, for veterans. It would also be a very good community -- - community outreach mechanism for this office and for the entire -- for the entire program.

In terms of the alignment between the disabled -- service-disabled veteran program and some others, so I heard Victor bringing up the 8(a), there are some very interesting regulatory history that’s also, I believe, addressed in our report, and that history goes to when the original rulemaking was done by the SBA, that the criteria for the controls were borrowed by reference from the 8(a) program. However, there was this dichotomy introduced. There was on the one hand a comment that this would not be done at the time as a business development program, yet the business development standards were imported.

My suggestion would be, of course, as I have suggested before in terms of reforming the program towards business development, that perhaps we think about this holistically and try to align the standards to the need and with the idea that we are -- you know, we’re going to align the control and all the other elements to the actual need of the veterans in terms of -- in terms of the growth.

And, finally, on the consistency as between the SBA and the VA, from my time on The Hill, I do know that the VA program was created sort of out of frustration by Congress at the time with perhaps the slow process and some of the other issues. And basically it was created as a pilot, if you will, for the VA to do this.

My suggestion is now we’ve got a lot of experience. This would be a good time to review and see which standard is better. I mean, there is -- there’s a lot of judicial decisions on this. There’s practical knowledge. There’s, you know -- and I believe we could come up with something, a uniform process that perhaps that would be tailored to the need, there would be some branding, the controls would reflect the actual need of the veteran, and, you know, if they’re at the development stage, there will be one set of controls; and if they’re more the, you know, more of at the graduated stage, then it will be a different set, things like that. Thank you, sir.

MR. KRAMER: All right, thanks. No, I think it’s very clear this is a robust area, not only for -- with need and interagency cooperation but also some potential good ideas on this one. So, we’ll highlight this one and then maybe move on to the other recommendations and see where we land.

MS. CARSON: We will move on to recommendation 15, and this is the area where we had other priority recommendations: vest the GI Bill benefit as a property right, allowing veterans to use funds both for education and small business creation activities such as counseling and business financing. There has been no movement on this one. We don’t know that there will be in the imminent future. So, I would recommend keeping it open at this time. Any comments?

MR. LENEY: I will defer to my colleague from VBA, but a concern -- well, let me let Cheryl comment on this, and then I can maybe reinforce her statements.

MS. FLOHR: Hi, this is Cheryl Flohr from VBA. Unfortunately, I feel at a disadvantage. I’ve been asking around for a copy of the recommendations. This is my first time joining this meeting, and if I heard the recommendation, it’s very hard to hear people who...
are in the room, by the way, had to do with utilization of the GI Bill. And I would have to defer to a colleague in our education service, and I did not hear anyone from education service either on the phone or in the room.

MR. LENETY: So, given Cheryl’s statement, I will add this, having worked with VBA, the undersecretary -- or deputy undersecretary Curt Coy. There is utilization of the GI Bill for training programs that are approved training programs for veteran entrepreneurs and business. The concern that the VA has on this is the utilization of the GI Bill for startup activities and business activities.

Barb mentioned earlier a program in the SBA to fund the capacity to start up a business. I recall many years ago there was a program whereby you could use your GI Bill to take courses in computer construction. And as an output of the course, you ended up with a computer.

Back in the days, Heathkit was a big computer maker. And one of the concerns that came up from that program is that people weren’t really getting educated on constructing computers. What they’d do -- what they did was they were using the GI Bill to buy -- have the Government buy them computers. So, there’s a concern that we don’t turn an education program into a grant program that could come back and bite us.

An example that was raised when we did this, looked at this a couple of years ago was, you know, a person wants to start a small business, wants to buy an F150 pickup truck as an element of his business and that we then fund that purchase as part of the startup of the business, and I could conceive of a way -- and I’m sure Victor could do so very quickly on how you could justify the purchase of an F150 as essential to your business -- and then the business goes out of business subsequent of the receipt of the funds to buy the F150 pickup truck, and then the Government is faced with no reports and IGAO and IG reports that whereby we have abuse of the program.

Now, as you said, Doug, Government people tend to be a little bit risk-averse. And I only say -- I give these examples not to assert that veterans would, as a group, would do this, but there is a history of this kind of thing in business startup. So, that’s why when you say there’s no movement, we think this one actually -- we moved on it because the GI Bill is utilized on the education and there isn’t a whole lot of energy in the VA to try to take over an SBA program on funding startups to education.
Moving to recommendation 17: explore revision to unemployment compensation for ex-service members to support small business creation.

MR. METHENY: So, Bill Metheny again from DOL. This is an interesting one to look at because at first blush it seems to indicate that veterans who are going through training programs to become self-employed might be ineligible for their unemployment benefits in those programs. It turns out that there are a number of ways that veterans can receive unemployment benefits while going through a variety of programs.

One of the themes that we all live with is the difference between federal policy and state implementation. So, unemployment is a state-driven event, and each state has their own rules for what people -- the qualification and what the benefits are.

The unique parts about unemployment insurance when we get into UCX, there are some helpful things for veterans, but it would be important to know that seven states have already developed what are called self-employment assistance programs that are designed to train veterans and they get their full benefits while going through it.

Two other categories that we kind of mentioned in our recommendation are state-approved training programs, as well as Veterans Administration-approved programs. Again, those are sort of state by state on whether being in those programs disqualifies you from benefits, but in most cases, the states have allowances for approved programs in this area and being able to continue with their unemployment benefits.

So, what I think our recommendation might be for the next step would be to put together -- what seems to be missing is the information and the awareness of those sorts of things. And, so, maybe what we’d do is start off with a fact sheet that we can put together that sort of spells out what’s going on and what the benefits are and where to find the specifics, depending on who you are and what you’re trying to do and see if that fact sheet is something that is a useful educational tool. And if there are gaps there, then we can pursue shortages.

MR. WYNN: Joe Wynn, VET-Force. Yeah, I appreciate the comments just made by the representative from the Department of Labor about the programs supported by -- that could be supported by the use of -- while you’re still on unemployment. And I also think it ties in also with recommendations 16 and 15 with regard to building access and opportunity to self-employment.
What we’re finding when we work through the state employment agencies, they are -- they are allowing funding for people to be trained for occupational skills to increase their opportunity for employment. And, so, as such, that’s probably why some states are allowing folks to receive unemployment benefits if they’re being trained, even for self-employment.

With that being said, it seems like it would also be relevant to keep on the table the possibility of using your GI Bill benefits for self-employment, because as we know now from the work that’s been being done with the SBA, with the TAP program, transition assistance, as such, entrepreneurship is a learning activity. You can go through training.

So, if we view GI Bill benefits, the education perspective of that, to learn how to run a business, then why, in fact, couldn’t a veteran use their benefits for training and education to run a business? It just goes hand in hand. So, I would hope that you guys would keep this open.

And, also, I think it’s important, not only with recommendation 15 to keep it open, but this interagency task force, in making these recommendations, I know it’s supposed to go up the chain to the President, maybe Congress or some folks, hopefully maybe they’ll look at it and see that if you’re endorsing support of such a concept and idea, maybe they would give it a little more consideration.

So, I hope that you won’t totally take that off the table.

MR. KRAMER: Well, thank you for that. Did we -- did you talk about 18? Did we get to 18?

MS. CARSON: No.

MR. KRAMER: Why don’t we do 18 real quick, just to make sure there are no comments on that, and then we’ll make sure that we can stay on -- on sort of schedule here.

MS. CARSON: So, 18 is examine the establishment of a new small business procurement initiative for firms whose total workforce is comprised of at least 35 percent or more veterans. And we proposed closure. I believe the notes are here. The new set-aside program exists. No further action at this time that we could identify. Are there any comments?

MR. LENEY: I apologize. In our work group discussions, perhaps not being very articulate on this, but I suggest that we might consider pivoting this as opposed to closing it. We have examined this one, and
different approach.

MR. BLUM: If I could also just jump in very quickly, I think part of the discussion initially is when this was originally proposed by the Task Force some years ago they were looking at it, could we model something like we do for HUBZones where there’s a mandatory requirement and a mandatory set-aside requirement.

And I think that quickly we realized that that would require legislation. But as you said, there are alternative ways in which we can create -- you know, make it part of the evaluation process, and I would just also add that’s at the front end. At the back end, you could also look at -- and as part of evaluating a contractor’s performance, you know, their adherence to the various compliance requirements.

And, in fact, there is a case at the FAR Council open to clarify when you’re looking at a contractor’s performance, one category would be their, you know, adherence to the various compliance requirements.

MR. KRAMER: And I’ll sort of put out for food for thought, this is -- I get a little bit excited about the potential with things like this because I think with the sort of automation we’re trying to do here, this sort of thing, which I think would have looked like a bureaucratic nightmare even five years ago, when we talk about HUBZone -- and HUBZone, for those of you who don’t know, tries to spur economic growth in economically depressed areas.

And, so, one of the requirements is that people hire people who live in that area and to make sure that they’re really creating roots -- has become so much easier with simple things like Google Maps.

And we can have people, instead of sending us a list, enter their information online, give the addresses of their employees, which you can confirm through various public records, and then plot on Google Maps that make sure that you’ve got enough people falling within that.

And I think this sort of thing, as well, with sort of records that are publicly available with, you know, the ability to verify in those automated ways, I think makes it much more streamlined than a bureaucratic nightmare it would have been a while ago. So, with that, let me -- this has been a very good conversation. If I wanted nothing else today, I wanted us to have a good conversation that would be a springboard for coming up with the next group of recommendations, which as was mentioned before, really become a centerpiece of the annual report that we do send up to the President out of this Task Force. And, so, I want to make sure that we get that right in this meeting and the next. And I think over the next couple of months, as we discuss not only how we pivot some of these but how we consider some new recommendations that go around, I think we’ve laid a really good groundwork for that.

So, that took us a little bit over that part of the meeting, but I thought it was time well spent, and we will sort of power through the rest of the meeting and make sure we get there.

What we’re going to do next is have our presentation on Agri-business policy, and I’ll sort of introduce that here in a second. But then after that, immediately after that, we will have time for additional sort of open public comment on any subject, not just the subjects that we put on the agenda. And then, finally, we will go around the room for any sort of additional sort of quick check-ins on top of what folks have already said from members of the Task Force.

So, we’re very happy today to have Lanon BACCAM -- did I get that right? -- who is Deputy Undersecretary over at Ag for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, who’s going to, as Barb sort of previewed before, talk to us a little bit today about specific opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses in the agri-business sector and agri-business policy.

So, Lanon.

MR. BACCAM: Administrator Kramer, thank you very much. SBA, thank you for the opportunity to be here. And thank you for focusing on agriculture as a business opportunity for veterans, because we believe at USDA this is an area that is growing. We’re seeing a lot of interest in it, but we also know with 17 percent of the population coming from rural America and 40 percent of our military being represented by rural Americans, there is a clear linkage between veterans and agriculture.

So, we want to make sure at the USDA that we provide them with tools and resources to assist them if they want to get back to these rural communities and they are interested in farming and ranching. And beyond farming and ranching, as well, because the ag industry is very large and many of the jobs that are available in rural America and in the ag industry can be transferred directly from their time in service from the military occupational specialties that they have and they learn and the leadership skills, we know that these veterans are a good fit for jobs in rural
For the programs that we have at USDA, we break it down into a few parts, and I’ll focus primarily on the programs that would help them to get into farming and ranching. And, obviously, getting into farming and ranching is a business. If you are a new and beginning farmer, you’re an entrepreneur as well, and I’ve heard somebody say agri-preneur, and I thought that was pretty neat.

So, getting into farming and ranching we know is difficult. And what we hear from veterans is there is -- there are challenges from access to capital, access to land, access to training, and USDA will help each step along the way. We have loan programs at the USDA for -- operating loans, for example, to help them purchase their equipment, their seed, their feed, their cattle, whatever it is that they need for the inputs into an agricultural operation.

We also have loan programs that assist with acquiring land so we can help veterans purchase land to start their operation, but as we know, there are many ways to start farming without even owning land. You can just rent the land.

There are microloan programs we have at USDA for the folks who are new and beginning because we know that not everyone’s going to come into the business at the same level, not everyone’s going to need to utilize the full scope of and the levels of loan programs we have, so the microloan program is a more streamlined product that’s easier to qualify for for veterans. And so we have these microloan programs to assist those folks who are just starting up.

We know that farming and ranching is a risky business. Once you have the investments that you made into your equipment, your land, your operating expenses, you start an operation, you get up and running, you want to manage those risks. And, so, at USDA, we administer the crop insurance program to help manage those risks. We have the non-insured crop disaster assistance program and many other products to help veterans manage those risks because it is a tremendous investment that they make into farming and ranching, if they choose to go down that route.

So, we can get the veterans into the business of farming and ranching. We can help them manage their risks, but we can also, more importantly, help them with the value-added production. So, this is the business side of USDA, and I’m just touching very quickly on just a few of the spots at USDA for -- where we have assistance, but in our Rural Development Office, we have a value-added producer grant that basically helps producers expand their ventures and increase their return on their ag. -- ag. commodities through value-added products.

So, for example, a veteran in Southwest Texas who grows green chiles, he has a window where he can grow his green chiles, but as soon as they turn red, he sells them for cents on the bushel, and that’s not ideal. So, basically, he used a value-added producer grant from USDA to turn his green chiles into -- or his red chiles into chipotle sauce, and now he can sell them worldwide. So, we do have programs at USDA to assist on the business side of the farming and ranching aspect, as well.

To get this all done, though, a lot of veterans who are serving currently, they are used to getting a lot of training for the skills that they learn. And, so, at USDA, we recognize that, we understand that. And through several of our different agencies, our National Institute for Food and Agriculture, we have the Beginning Farmer/Rancher Development Program. This is a $20 million program every single year that has a 5 percent set-aside that goes to organizations that all or in part assist veterans. And it helps them with technical training; it helps them with understanding and learning about USDA programs and how to apply for them.

There’s also funding for AgrAbility. AgrAbility is an organization that has existed for a couple of decades, and they have primarily focused on assisting peoples with disabilities -- physical disabilities -- get into farming and ranching. And more recently, they have brought on a full-time veteran farmer coordinator to focus on the veterans in farming because there is a lot of interest from those veterans who do have disabilities and then want to get into farming or ranching.

We also at the USDA fund an organization that runs a program for us called Armed to Farm. Armed to Farm is an educational, classroom-based training program that couples with in-field experience. So, the veterans can actually see and hear and read about the business planning, financial management aspect of it, as well as go out in the field and see multiple different operations and understand more fully what farming and ranching is. And this is not just for veterans. This is open to their spouses as well.

And the last major funding arm we have is through our Office of Advocacy and Outreach, our 2501 program does many of the same things as the beginning
I feel, in a way, uniquely qualified to speak here today. I’m a veteran myself. I’ve worked with the Farmer Veteran Coalition in the past. I’ve got a farming business that I started from scratch some five years ago that has achieved a nice scale.

Okay, so, today I have a short presentation. I will keep it short. And I want you to take away two themes from this.

One is the scope of the ag problems facing America today and the outlook for that in the years ahead, and then also the notion that -- and especially in light of the mission of this Task Force, that the whole is worth more than the sum of its parts.

And there’s a lot of gaps that exist today, but there are some very low-cost or no-cost fixes that could be employed in order to cover this and to have a much broader benefit. And I think in line with what Undersecretary Baccam said, we -- the veteran population could be engaged to become this next wave of entrants into the field of agriculture. So, next slide, please.

I’m going to talk a little bit about the GI Bill. We’re going to start with that, and we’re going to come back to that at the very end. And the reason is as you look into the history of the GI Bill, it’s been around for over 70 years, but because of some critical missteps that happened at the end of World War II, that is why it was -- it absolutely needed to be introduced during the middle of World War II.

And there are some historical perspectives on what we’ve done, which I will highlight. One thing I would like you to just think about as I go into this, to give you an idea of the scale of the problem affecting agriculture today, you need to understand that there are 100,000 fewer farmers this year than last year. And that pace is going to continue for the next nine years. We’re going to have a million fewer farmers, okay?

Now, how many farmers do we have to begin with? You know, we’re talking around 1 percent of the population. So, to lose a third of your farmers in a decade is incredible. Plus, we know that they are aging.

The other issue to consider is while the number of farmers is decreasing, the amount of arable land to farm in this country is also decreasing. Okay? We lose 5 million acres every three years. In 1990, something like 20 percent of the land in this country was arable. And now we’re less than 15 percent. We’re reaching epic proportions. And if that wasn’t bad enough, every day on this planet we got almost a
quarter-million new mouths to feed. Every day. And
everybody’s looking to America to feed them somehow.
So, just -- if you just think of a triangle
and you got your farmers on one end and our land on the
other and the mouths to feed, pretty soon, you end up
with this straight line or some weird, weird shape.
Just -- it’s just something to think about. Okay.
Now, with respect to the original GI Bill, I
think at the onset, it was a very noble venture. And
what has happened over the years is different
departments of the Government have been formed, and
things have been part-and-parceled out. And that’s
fine. I think different departments can take deeper
dives into this and adjust their programs, but what is
lost in this process is the full picture, the full
oversight.
And over the years, as the needs of the
country have changed, we have removed things such as
guaranteed loans for businesses. We have removed
things such as free land for farms. I mean, obviously,
the frontier closed over 100 years ago. There’s no
land available anymore, but at one time it was there
and there was a need for it to be there.
And I would also argue that when it was --
when it was brought forward in 1944, when you consider
something like 20 percent of the population was going
to be a returning vet, they needed to do something to
engage these people. And with the criticality of
agriculture today, I would argue the same holds true.
We have a need to feed the country. It should be
something under consideration.
Okay, so my point in this is just we can have
more programs; we could have -- we could have more
agencies touching programs; but we just don’t want to
lose sight of the full picture, what is the full
picture of support we’re offering to veterans entering
agriculture. So, next slide.
Due to time considerations, I’m going to skim
through some of this, but it just provides some
historical perspective going back 2,000 years, all the
way to the Roman Empire, on how land grants were made
available to pensioned soldiers. It was a way of
giving them a little bit of respite for their efforts,
but also it gave them a critical role to fulfill in
society. Okay, next slide.
Okay, I did mention 100,000 farmers a year
retiring; average age is 58 years old and increasing,
soon to be 59. There are about 20 million veterans in
the country, and a lot do come from rural America. It
would be nice to bring them back to rural America, but
America will need more farmers in future years to feed
themselves, and if we can get some of these gaps filled
in interagency programming, we may just be able to get
the veteran population engaged in the future to do just
that. So, next slide, please.
With that in mind, over the past years, I have
worked with the Farmer Veteran Coalition. I still work
within the New York State Chapter, but last year I
worked at the national level with them, and I was
tapped to lead development of a white paper to discuss
these very issues: why were veterans having such a
time entering agriculture?
And, so, in order to do that -- next slide --
I engaged a small team of about 15 people across the
country, thought leaders, small business owners,
university professors, people that worked with the
state departments of labor, state veteran affairs
organizations. And we really dug down deep into
tangible examples of where people have had problems but
also we used it more as a springboard to come up with
potential solutions for these problems.
To date, this paper has been shared with four
Representatives, but the Senators were Senator Pat
Roberts, Senator Blumenthal from Connecticut, and the
two Senators from New York.

At that time, in discussions with most of these people, the challenges that we still face today were addressed then, you know, that there is no magical pot of money; that we would have to do more with less; that we would have to really focus on things that were low-cost or no-cost. And that is really what we tried to highlight in the white paper. I’m going to take you through some of those recommendations here in a minute.

Just bear in mind, though, as we did this, these were some of the constraints that we had. Veterans may be disabled or not, and that’s important to remember because farming is a touch business. The veteran may have dependents to support. There may not be any other source of income. And that’s important because as I dig into the recommendations, you’ll see it takes about three years to achieve a funding source to purchase a farm.

And, finally, at the bottom here, I don’t know of a single veteran farmer out there who isn’t working some sort of other job because of the seasonality of farming itself or because of the cash infusions required into agriculture during certain months of the year. So, if you do have off-farm income and you do unexpectedly lose that job, then you’re going to have a problem, not just sustaining your family, but now you’re not going to be able to sustain your business at all. So, okay, next slide.

There are three more slides here. As we go through these, I just want you to bear in mind that I think there’s a very fine line that we cross or that we have to manage, which is ensuring due diligence as a government but also the impression of deterrents that we’re giving to people trying to enter agriculture.

Okay, let me -- in the interest of time, I just will -- we will skip these last three slides, and I want to just highlight some policy changes that were recommended in this white paper, okay? And I’m going to it department by department. And I am hopeful that some of these may work their way into the Task Force over time.

So, the first would be for the Department of Labor, and this is around the definition of an apprenticeship, the requirement for workman’s compensation, and the definition of unemployment when you own a business. And it’s very particular within agriculture. So, everybody would agree that it makes no sense to just throw money at a problem. It makes no sense to throw money at a veteran and say go buy a farm.

What Farmer Veteran Coalition advocates, what the Entrepreneurial Bootcamp for Veterans and a lot of other organizations advocate is that you provide some training, and then once somebody is trained, then it’s the right time to make that step into purchasing a farm.

But if you’re trying to learn how to farm, you have to be able to learn from somebody who’s doing it now. And here’s where it gets tricky. If you go to find a farmer and ask him to be your mentor, then you’re actually being an apprentice. And if that’s the case, then that farmer either needs to -- the farmer basically needs to pay you to be learning from him, and that farmer needs to provide workman’s compensation on you. And it becomes an employment-type relationship.

Within the Department of Agriculture, one of the things that we recommend is a review of the three-year time frame it takes to get a USDA loan if you own a farm. There is one year of that that’s waiverable for military experience, which is nice, and we recognize that the loans that come out of the USDA are a much different pot of money than the much faster process that the SBA uses. But in reality for a lot of veterans entering agriculture, the USDA loans are happening because the USDA is serving as a lender of last resort. But there is no such program, such as the Patriot Express, which exists -- or used to exist within the SBA, which is a very fast turnaround.

Within the Department of Veterans Affairs, for any -- we would like to see the GI Bill expanded, at no cost, but to cover ag internships and to provide a stipend in the same way as happens today for people that sit at home and attend an online university. The hours in farming are quite long, and it precludes a lot of veterans from being able to work enough outside of agriculture learning their trade in order to feed their families.

Finally, for the Department of Veterans Affairs, we would like to see an update to the occupational net computer compute system used by vocational rehabilitation and education to allow for careers within agriculture. And there are some specifics on that within the report.

Finally, for the Department of Commerce, specifically the SBA, we would like to see the SBA being able to lend into the ag sector directly. And, finally, the microloan program is great, and it is very fast, but it doesn’t -- it doesn’t approach the scale needed for loans to enter agriculture.
You know, I mentioned this triangle at the beginning of having farmers and land and mouths to feed, and I think if we can actually work on a different triangle, which is sort of the funding aspect, the education aspect, and the access of land, we may just be able to approach the scale of the problem, approach the same scale of addressing the problem as we did after World War II.

Thank you for your time.

MS. CARSON: Thank you, Jamie. Are there questions at this time or comments?

Go ahead.

MR. KIDALOV: I’d like to offer some comments very quickly. Thank you so much. I’m just very impressed by everything that you guys said today and your statements yesterday that I heard on this issue. I wanted to make a quick comment about the access to land. It turns out that there is this very interesting statutory authority that is available to the Department of Defense -- 10 USC 2684(a).

10 USC 2684(a) provides -- gives the Secretary the authority to basically enter into agreements with state and local governments and also different conservation organizations. And they provide agricultural conservation easements to prevent encroachments on areas around military installations.

And, so, for example, in Monterey County, there are -- there is an ag land trust. And that ag land trust holds some of these easements and they do end up -- so they protect the land around military installations from encroachments, they use it for agriculture. And I believe that they use it for -- I believe they use it for wine -- you know, grape farming. I also believe they use it for -- you know, for almond nut farming and I see -- I see Mike over there nodding, nodding with his head.

So, I would volunteer folks that I know I can call on at least to try and see maybe if that would be of interest to have them come over and maybe do some kind of a brief on how this program works and then seeing if the Department and then working with the DOD small business programs, seeing if there would be interest in DOD supporting and having some kind -- maybe, you know, maybe either, you know, for some kind of either rulemaking or agreement or something to use that authority to help veterans gain access to land for agriculture.

MS. CARSON: Thank you.

Shannon, I think you’re still on the line. If I could ask you to take note of that and find potentially the right connection point.

And, Lanan, did you have a comment?

MR. BACCAM: Just -- yes, quickly. Lanan Baccam with the USDA. I have spoken with the folks in the REPI program at DOD. They came over; they gave me a briefing on it. I’ve spoken with Joan Knott with the Conservation Land Trust down in -- near Fort Hood, Texas, where they have the largest REPI program currently, that was just awarded just a few months ago.

We are currently in coordination with them to see where there are overlaps with ag easements and USDA programs and our Conservation Reserve Program to see where we can’t find land that we can transfer over to veterans to start farming and ranching. So, we are definitely working on that.

MR. KIDALOV: Fantastic.

MS. CARSON: I thank you again for the briefs, and I did want to mention for those that are in the room and those on the phone as well that Michael O’Gorman, who is the founder of the Farmer Veteran Coalition, is with us today and gave an outstanding brief yesterday. I would like to share that with you. We will send it out after this meeting, along with the other documents that you’ve seen today, because it does talk about some of the therapeutic benefits, not just economic, of farming for veterans.

And one of the things that we would like to see in the interagency are SBA definitely agrees with the assertions that you must be a good businessperson as well as a farmer to be successful. They’re not independent. And SBA does have a role in providing capacity there. We do include farm and agriculture practitioners in our Boots to Business classes in several locations already, looking to expand that in coordination with USDA, on what service members hear before they leave active duty about opportunities in agriculture.

And there’s a lot of tech in it now. It is not what you might have thought of with the rolling hills or flat lands of Nebraska and Iowa where Lanan and I are most familiar. So, there’s urban farming, for example. There are lower barrier to entries in dollars and technique that are available, too, in some sectors. So, we are committed to learning more and supporting you, absolutely interested in whether DOD’s SkillBridge program for apprenticeship, if there is something that can be examined for the agriculture industry in the near future. Thanks.

MR. KRAMER: Very good. Well, at this time in the agenda, we wanted to have a dedicated spot, as I
mentioned before, just for public comments for anybody
who’s participating either here in the room or on the
phone, sort of outside the agenda but just wanted to
bring to the attention of the Task Force anything that
you would like us to consider going forward.
So, I think we do have at least one hand mic.
And, again, just as a reminder, if you can identify
yourself both by name and affiliation so we can make
sure we’ve got that on the record.
MS. ARTIS: Hi, my name is Laurie Sayles
Artis. I’m also a member of VET-Force, and I’m
president and CEO of Civility Management Solutions.
And I just really want to applaud what I heard today.
I served in the United States Marine Corps, and there
were many rural guys, to the point I was like a foreign
object, you know, a woman that’s black, you know, so
they were definitely from rural parts of the country;
however, I totally agree with what you’re saying
regarding what -- the GI Bill, and I really hope that
you all keep that on the table and open because I
joined the Marine Corps as an entrepreneur.
If I had known that those things were optional
for the GI Bill, it would have made a big difference in
as far as some of the choices I made when I served.
And I think for certain it would apply to the rural
community, so thank you.
MR. KRAMER: Very good. Thank you for that.
Other individuals that wish to make a
statement?
MR. WYNN: Joe Wynn, VET-Force. I just want
to say again also I had an opportunity to attend the
SBA Veterans Advisory Committee meeting yesterday as
well, and I want to commend and appreciate the report,
Barbara, that you presented and the materials. And as
such, I just wanted to say some of the information that
you talked about with regard to the recommendations,
are there plans to, you know, kind of present or
release the information that supported the decisions
with regard to those that were closed so we’ll kind of
have a record of that?
And also, you know, since these were
recommendations based upon the reports from previous
years, is there sort of like an itemized list of what’s
been being done toward even those that are open up to
this point?
MS. CARSON: We have both the transcripts that
describe the activity that we have undertaken, which
are burdensome to read, so I don’t highly recommend
that as a source, and that is why it is important that
the annual reports will soon be published as well.
That’s where the record is of what we have done, why we
think we have achieved some things.
And as Deputy Administrator Kramer said, we
are turning that over for clearance in the next couple
of weeks, and it will be public. So, these documents
that you’ve seen today will also be online, posted with
the transcript for review. I will try to address our
concern that, you know, I know the report would be --
that’s one place to get it, but you’d like to see it
consolidated and address the recommendations. I’ll see
what we can produce for you. Thanks.
MR. PHIPPS: Michael Phipps, the Advisory
Committee -- I’m the Chairman of the Advisory Committee
on Veteran Business Affairs, and we have our committee
the day before. Some of you were at that -- some of
you recognize me; some of you guys I’ve already talked
to numerous times. I was just going to reiterate a
little bit what Joe said on a summary of the
recommendations.
One of the things that we’re doing on our
committee, and I think Davy is going to touch upon
this, is trying to line up our goals. We have a lot of
interlocking goals here that could be feeding on each
other with the work that we do and the work that you
guys do, so we’re going to be taking that step forward
in the coming meetings to kind of lock -- do some of
those goals together. So, I’m just going to hit on a
little bit of what Joe said.
MR. KRAMER: Great, thank you. Anything else
from folks in attendance? Go ahead, sir.
MR. O’GORMAN: Yeah, I’m Michael O’Gorman, the
Director of the Farmer Veteran Coalition, so I
appreciate very much bringing up agriculture today and
yesterday and Jamie and Lanan’s presentation.
And I want to reiterate what Max proposed and
what Lanan said is happening, that we are working very
closely with the Compatible Land Trust. We just got a
competitive grant from the DOD to protect -- help
protect a lot of farmland around Fort Hood. As soon as
the water recedes, we will be going down to look at it,
and at least it was under a lot of water last week when
we -- when we met and spoke about it.
But there is a lot of farmland around a lot of
bases that needs to be preserved in order to maintain
the efficiency of the bases, and agriculture is a great
way. It’s also a great opportunity for beginning
farmers to get on that land in an affordable way with
long-term leases and to be able to grow and sell
produce that they can get into the bases and feed the
military families and military personnel. So, thank
you.

MR. KRAMER: Anybody else? Anybody on the phone?

(No response.)

MR. KRAMER: Okay, not hearing any, but we still have some time. So, at this point, let me go around, and maybe rather than calling people off the list, we’ll just go around the room so people have an expectation when they’re going to come up and can prepare emotionally and substantively. Or just individual check-ins, again, I’d ask everybody, you know, I think we had a good conversation before.

I think a lot of issues got out, so to the extent you just want to provide an update of what issues you’re working on, what your priorities are and all of that, we’ll just go around the room and hear from the members on that.

So, Amanda.

MS. BANTON: Amanda with the Military Officers Association of America. Not a lot of time to emotionally prepare, but I just want to point -- just some common observations and where I think -- what I’m going to take back to our organization.

I think going through all of these recommendations and seeing how many are closed, I just validate that this is very important and just really proud to be a part of it. So, thank you.

MR. KRAMER: That’s great, and let us know if we can provide any support for that program as well. We’d be happy to do that.

MS. BANTON: You’re all invited. We’d love to have you. I appreciate that.

MR. METHENY: Bill Metheny from the Department of Labor Vets. I already highlighted the great unemployment numbers and the direction that that’s going for our veterans, so that was great news. In Vets specifically, we’re part of a great team of trying to help transitioning service members as they’re leaving the service.

And, so, one of the things that’s happened in the last quarter is that curriculum that’s part of -- designed and developed by an interagency task force, the new curriculum has been updated and just rolled out in the last month and a half. And, so, it includes information about small business and entrepreneurship and how to get more information. So, that’s out there.

Another nice part about that is it comes out -- the employment part comes out in a big honking workbook that is handed out to everybody that goes through it. It’s also online as a PDF, which is great.

want to say hats off to SBA and all the agencies here for putting together -- well, obviously nothing’s perfect and there’s still more to do, a lot has been accomplished, and I think it’s really important to acknowledge that, so thank you for that.

And what I’m seeing as the underlying theme here is really an awareness issue, and that’s something I plan to bring back to our organization. I didn’t know about a lot of the programs that a lot of agencies had available or any initiative -- a lot of initiatives but not as many, and I’ve been in this space for seven years. So, I think what’s important to me and our organization is making sure that the transitioning group that we assist and our members in the military community that we work with are aware of all of these things that are available to them and making it easy for them to access that.

Aside from that, some of the other -- the only thing I’m working on with the organization, not on the legislative side, but we are hosting an event at the Air and Space Museum on June 30th. We have close to a thousand people who have registered, but there’s an entrepreneurship focus, and over half of the people who have registered for this event have elected to attend and explore our entrepreneurship session, which further if you want to live by PDF, but one of the things that we’re working on now is a partnership with Amazon, and it’s going to come out in Kindle format so that it can be downloaded for free in an e-reader format that’s familiar for everybody and you don’t have to be online to be able to get that once you downloaded it. So, that’s just on the transition part. A very recent rollout.

We recognize that it’s hard -- too hard for veterans to take their -- the skills that they’ve accumulated in the military and apply them towards accreditation and certification once they get out. And it -- and, so, what we’ve just completed is an 18-month study through the National Governors Association that just was rolled out in the last couple of weeks that looked at some pilot states on how we can smooth those processes out to get those licenses and certifications. So, we took a few key skillsets that are common to all services. The six states tried them out, and in the report that’s released, you’ll find not only some best practices, some hurdles, but also some costs that are associated with that. So, that’s online as well.

In the last month and a half, early May, we rolled out Veterans.gov. Veterans.gov is a great website if you are a veteran looking for employment.
It’s -- that’s one button. One button is if you’re an employer looking for a veteran. And then another button is I want to work for myself. That’s right up front. There’s a map on there that says I want to know what’s available to me in this state because that’s home for me in Montana, Nebraska, wherever. So, you click on that and you get the single link to that state’s -- what that state says is where’s where we want you to see to find out about employment in our state.

So, that’s Veterans.gov, brand new, just about a month old, getting great feedback there so far.

And then the last part that I’d highlight are some other partnerships that we’re engaged pretty heavily in with the Veterans Administration, one of which we were talking moments ago about the VR&E Program, Veterans -- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program. So, we’re already partnered and have updated MOAs with the VA that links in the VR&E Program with what the DOL does and what the states do in terms of employment services. But what we realized is we were not crystal clear to say every single enrolled VR&E Chapter 31 veteran needs to go through that process.

So, we’re updating our language to say 100 percent needs to get the full benefits. So what that means is once enrolled, part of the process right up front is they get enrolled to a state employment person that helps them with the labor market information, that then helps them to define with their VA counselor exactly what program they’re going to go into because there’s a job or a market indicator that says that’s going to be worthwhile training.

Then they go through the training on the back side. Once they’ve completed that training and they’re coming out of whatever that program is, they get linked back in with the employment folks to say now let’s make it real and get you into a job. So, 100 percent referral is one of the big changes that we’re updating our language and our policies right now to do.

And then, lastly, great work by the VA’s My VA Community team. And if you’ve not heard of CVEBs before, Community Veterans Engagement Boards are these entities that started off in 25 communities and cities around the country, went to 50, going to 100. And those are these umbrellas where all things veterans can start linking in. What we’re doing as we’re partnering into that effort is we are linking not only the US DOL folks into those boards but also those state employment teams that live and operate and know those communities.

So, that’s a new one that’s still underway, working towards that 100 percent -- or 100 cities with the VA.

And we think that’s going to pay lots of dividends.

And I think it’s a pretty broad open invitation for others that want to do that. And, so, whether it’s the small business community or whatever,

I think we all would be interested in that. So, if you go to My VA Communities and look up CVEBs, you’ll start to find out where they are and points of contact and so on. So, those are some of the things just in the last quarter since we’ve met that are going on, and I think we’re making great progress and there’s lots of energy around these. Thank you.

MR. KRAMER: Thanks, Bill.

MR. LENEY: Bill, thank you for giving my report.

MR. METHENY: Oh, sorry.

MR. LENEY: No, no. No, I want to reinforce what Bill said about the CVEBs, and we are now working to make sure we include veteran entrepreneurs and the veteran small business community in each of these veterans boards. They have been more focused to date on the veteran employment because that we see as a high potential for ROI.

The only other thing I’d mention is we have talked as one of the Task Force recommendations about the veteran entrepreneur resource -- information resources and BusinessUSA. I would just offer up to all of our members of the Task Force and those who are here, one of the challenges that we found, we have -- we developed the veteran entrepreneurship portal; we then partnered with BusinessUSA to make sure we were using a single effort. That partnership has borne a lot of fruit. BusinessUSA has really enabled us to take it to the next level.

Our big challenge is sustainment and keeping it fresh with the programs that are out there. There’s a lot of stuff going on. We invested a considerable amount of time and resources in trying to find out what’s going on, but listening here, I’ve been taking notes to go back and identify those things that are now happening that we have not yet collected in the portal.

So, we don’t have a great solution for sort of keeping it up to date, except that we’re now going to be putting on our website a place where people can identify, hey, I saw this program; here it is; we get it on to BusinessUSA. Otherwise, it becomes less and less useful. So, I would just alert everybody to that opportunity and solicit input.

The only other thing I have is just a very tactical note. The chief acquisition officer of the VA
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>has committed in our annual national veteran small business engagement. Last year, we brought about 350 VA program officers and contracting officers. This year, we’re sort of going all in. We’ll be bringing 1,200 VA staff to Minneapolis to engage with veteran small businesses. We are going to be -- we’ve just gotten permission to do that, and we’re bringing about 1,000 contracting officers from across the VA. So, this is sort of an all-in effort. The challenge will be I would really like to have more veteran-owned small businesses than VA staff. So, because it -- you know, when we do these access events, and that’s been our focus as we partner with the SBA on the development side, you know, let them focus there, that, you know, the contracting officers and program managers have got to get a return on investment. And we’re using that as a major market research effort, but I just -- in an era of declining programs, you know, Secretary McDonald has really said, okay, let’s really take this -- you know, take a shot at taking this to the next level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 106 | simplification proposals and also that our acquisition innovation advocates at the agencies are now starting to gather in our council, and which by the way, we want to make sure that our small business directors and OSDBUs are linked up with them since there’s a lot of synergies in the work that I think they do, both to, you know, help contracting officers with market research and identifying promising businesses. Just one additional point on the regulatory front. There is a rule that GSA put together that’s currently at ORIA and will probably be released soon that addresses the way that the GSA and the Federal Supply Service price their pricing policies for the GSA schedules. And I mention this because, as we know, that program is responsible for somewhere between 7 and 10 percent of annual spending, so it’s basically the largest gateway in the country for selling commercial goods and services. And it has been identified repeatedly, the pricing policies, as amongst the most onerous and cost-prohibitive for businesses that want to do -- sell to the Government. GSA has taken this very seriously, and they’ve looked very carefully at these current practices, which require contractors that want to participate to provide detailed disclosures of their commercial sales practices and then to track during the life of their contracts what sales discounts they’re giving to like commercial customers and provide these on to the Government. They have issued a proposed rule back in the spring of 2015, and as I mentioned, there’s now a final rule that’s at ORIA that we expect to release soon. And I hope to be able to just discuss further with the Task Force in the next session, but suffice it to say I think that you’ll see a lot of discussion and a lot of relief -- burden relief being provided to all businesses, including the 80 percent to small businesses that make up this program. |

| 107 | small business community. Also, again, our push to develop our workforce, again to train. We are on track to roll out a career field in FY16 at the end or FY17, which will be another huge accomplishment for DOD and a lot of the courses are focused on how to do better in identifying those areas in which to improve, supporting the small business community. So, again, those are a couple of highlights from the DOD side. Thank you. |

| 108 | MR. KIDALOV: Thank you. Thank you, Shannon. I’d like to just give a brief update about some activities related to NPS. So, yesterday, I was pleased to appear before the Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Development at the invitation of the SBA and the chairman of the committee, Chairman Phipps. And I appreciate Barb Carson and the chairman for inviting me. And the topic of the appearance was to discuss the implementation and the various authorities that might exist with implementation of a service-disabled veteran-owned small business program. So, as you may know, in the research that I’ve done that was done at NPS, we’ve recommended creation of such a business development program for service-disabled veterans. And, so, the presentation yesterday discussed five possible ways to do this. An executive |
MR. KRAMER: I don’t think that I have any, deputy, and then --

And, so, the presentation addresses all of that. It is part of the -- it is part of the record.

My recommendations were that the executive order and the SBA regulation would be the strongest. Executive order would be the strongest. SBA regulations would also be available under the Fox decision of the United States Supreme Court. An agency is able to reconsider and come up with a new policy and reform its prior policy.

So, I would -- I would offer these materials for further information and would be happy to answer any questions. If there are any questions from the deputy, and then --

MR. KRAMER: I don’t think that I have any,

although we’ll follow up with everybody and let them know the easiest way to make the materials available.

MR. KIDALOV: Okay. And then, also, I would like to mention some issues about continued focus on research -- research and advocacy related to veterans.

So, this may -- I have learned recently this may possibly be my last meeting of the Task Force, for which I would like to express my gratitude to the Administrator and the Deputy Administrator for serving.

The reason for it is that the Naval Postgraduate School apparently decided to cancel the government contracts law professorship and reestablish it to specifically do research against -- advocating against service-disabled veterans and against small businesses. Now, they recruited, specifically went out to recruit an academic, and I’ll just quote some of the -- who has lobbied against the veterans programs, including the service-disabled veteran program, testified before Congress.

I’ll just give some quotes. For example, my research will seek to diminish emphasis on small business and similar divide the buyer redistribution participation rates. In testimony before the House Small Business Committee, that academic said that creating a program for disabled veterans would cater to special interest groups and would be unrealistic and fiscally irresponsible, again calling the disabled veterans special interest groups, arguing that giving them recovery contracts would reduce the value for money received and customer satisfaction, arguing that small business programs are selfish interests and just -- and that they create clunky inefficiencies and that -- and my -- and one notable comment is that creating -- this is in prepared -- in prepared testimony to Congress, that creating a program for service-disabled veterans would appear comical, looking through objective lens of foreign government officials and calling these -- and calling small business programs -- calling them a greatest threat to procurement reform.

I will -- I will be happy to provide more detailed information, including the -- any kind of identifying information through the SBA, not on -- not at this time. But my -- now, all of these -- all of these priorities to do this kind of research, this kind of advocacy, goes against the stated policy of the Department of Defense to support service-disabled veterans. It also goes against the stated policy of the Department of the Navy. Nobody abolished these policies, and yet the Naval Postgraduate School appears to be committed to investing money and resources and providing a platform for this kind of advocacy.

I would recommend that the Task Force under -- and the Small Business Administration undertake a request from the Secretary of the Navy to confirm that, in fact, the Navy would not be -- the Naval Postgraduate School would not be sponsoring research that -- or advocacy or instruction that demeans service-disabled veterans, that argues that these programs are illegitimate, and that undermines them and that instead the Naval Postgraduate School would continue research in support of small business programs and would expand it and would expand it in its instructional and research and service and advocacy curricula.

MR. KIDALOV: Okay.

MR. KRAMER: Well, Max, if this does, in fact, turn out to be your final meeting, I very much want to express my gratitude for the contributions you’ve made, not only in these meetings but clearly what you’ve brought in from outside the meetings.

And, you know, you provided a reminder again today that as much as everybody, you know, in this room and on this line may take it as a given the value of the focus of small businesses with regard to innovation.
MR. DODDS: Thank you, sir.

MR. KRAMER: Okay, thanks.

MR. DODDS: Okay, thank you. I’m going to give you an update on government contracting from SBA’s perspective. I’m not -- can I go to the first slide?

My name is Ken Dodds from the Small Business Administration, the Office of Procurement Policy, Planning and Liaison.

So, since we last met, we announced how the Government did in FY15 in government contracting, and we did very well. It was a very good year. Third year in a row where we met the small business goal, 25 percent; doubled the SDB goal with the highest ever; met the women-owned small business goal for the first time ever, over 5 percent; and then the highest ever small business goal, 25 percent; doubled the SDB goal with the highest ever; service-disabled veteran-owned percentage at 3.9.

And I don’t know if they handed this out, but so we gave out score cards to all the agencies. It kind of breaks down, you know, how we grade them.

Right now, it’s about 80 percent is prime contracting; 10 percent is subcontracting; and 10 percent are these other success factors. So, we had a great FY15.

Since we last met, we have issued a final rule on limitations on subcontracting and teaming. This is based on the NDA of 2013. We publish it on May 31st, and it will be effective June 30th, and it basically allows you to team together as a prime/sub relationship to meet the limitations on subcontracting. And it also allows firms to joint venture together and qualify as small, as long as each entity is small.

You know, previously, the rule was if you tried to joint venture we would combine you and you’d have to meet the size standard collectively. So, we’ve -- we’re trying to help small businesses team as contracts get, you know, bigger and harder to get on.

The second thing or major rule that you’re interested in is the mentor/protégé rule. We were given authority to create a mentor/protégé program for all small businesses. We issued a proposed rule, and we have comments, and we’re very, very, very close to issuing the rule as a final rule. I predict that it will be issued by the end of this month as a final rule. We’ll have -- it’s usually a 30-day effective date, which would put it into July.

MR. KRAMER: Okay, thanks.

MR. KLINGELHOFER: Victor Klingelhofer, VVA.

Essentially, we are very interested in the future of the recommendations, the new recommendations to be put in, the refocused recommendations to be -- how they’re changed. There are four basic areas that we really think need to be highlighted and continue to be highlighted, not that these haven’t already.

The first and probably foremost is the entire certification issue. So much confusion still on the part of small businesses as to what they have to do, how they have to do it, and I mean, frankly, the information is there and I often don’t understand quite why they can’t find it, but I think that we need to continue that.

And as Tom and others have discussed, we also have to look at the possibility of making a government-wide certification process for the veteran-owned small businesses -- I’m sorry, the service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses. That, I think, needs to be our -- one of our highest goals.

Next, we’re very interested in also examining the -- how the reporting procedures are used. One of
1 the things that we are concerned about are the number
2 of contracts and types of contracts that are exempted
3 from the reporting procedures. You know, there are,
4 you know, broad categories of contracts that aren’t
5 even taken into account, and we believe that, one, they
6 should be taken into account, and, two, because they’re
7 being taken into account more veterans will have the
8 ability to participate in those programs.
9  
10 Oh. And interestingly enough, something came
11 up recently that I saw, and I’m not even quite sure
12 where this would fit in, but probably in the
13 subcontracting, increasing the subcontracting programs,
14 because I had heard that recently that one of the
15 problems that DOE is having in meeting its contracting
16 goals is the fact that they have so many GOCO
17 facilities, and none of the awards from the GOCO
18 contractors are counted towards their -- toward the
19 overall contracting goal, for the 3 percent goal.
20  
21 Next, we also want to continue looking at and
22 see what we can do with regard to roadblocks to veteran
23 businesses, for example, the strategic sourcing. We
24 continue to think that that needs to be examined more
25 carefully and bundling of contracts in general. I know
26 that there’s always -- people are always talking about
27 bundled contracts and how we need to look at it, and

117

118

119

120

team to increase the small business issues that the
committee will take on in FY16. To increase the
coverage over these issues that I just passed around,
the members will take on individual topics and conduct
a little bit of homework and research on our own.
  
As you can see, some of the topics are very
traditional and align directly with the Task Force
recommendations, stuff like finance, outreach, and
resources. They’re relevant and important. They’re
always going to be there. But we’re also taking some
nontraditional tracks in terms of looking at veteran
farmers, import and export, and the Advisory
Committee’s outreach to the public in what we do and
all the good information that we get. We don’t want to
to get siloed; we want to be able to share that. It’s
just a matter of finding the right platform.
  
A summary of yesterday’s meetings, we -- Mr.
Dodds had presented on the status of the mentor/protégé
final rule. We had a brief on SBA’s veterans business
development programs and progress and the report on the
first cohort. We also heard from a few of our farmer
veterans advocates, and in light of the Farm Act that
included multiple provisions to increase veterans and
ag programs, there is interest in the inclusion of USDA
at the veterans small business table.
  
And then, finally, and I really appreciate
what both Bill and Tom said about the CVB program. We
also think that it’s important to try to see what we
can do to reduce duplication of efforts between the
various agencies so that dollars are spent better in --
and they’re working toward in a collaborative manner.
And the CVEB program really seems to be doing that, and
maybe that needs to be looked at so that we can enhance
partnerships between the agencies.

MR. FERRARO: Good morning. This is Eric
Ferraro from GSA. Just a couple of highlights from the
last meeting. Based on the number of questions I was
getting from small -- from veterans, we decided I would
answer them right away, of course, and then pass them
to my small business office. So, our small business
office has decided -- jointly, we’ve decided to set up
a -- office hours, or we’ll calling it a veterans
virtual coaching session, so we’ll have a scheduled
time each month for folks that just chat in questions
or email in questions or get online and answer
questions. And, hopefully, that’s just another conduit
to get information out and it’s a set time where if the
veterans or veteran businesses are interested, they can
call in and ask.
We also heard from Kathy Douquet, who is the Executive President of Blue Star Families. She unveiled some research that she did or her organization did on the plight of mil spouses and I believe entrepreneurial and unemployment issues. What we got out of it is that we might be doing a disservice to them and the veterans by lumping them together and trying to kill two birds with one stone. The notion was raised that perhaps we should address these entities separately. The Advisory Committee has not made a decision on what to do. It was just -- I just want to present that it was brought up.

Switching gears, in terms of the Legion programs and services, we just hosted a Boots to Business Reboot session in New Jersey, very successful. We’re going to do it again in a couple months. They’re being hosted at American Legion posts. Two months from now, we will be having our national convention in Cincinnati, Ohio. We will be hosting a Reboot session there as well. What’s different from the one that we do nationally is that it will not be an American Legion post, and we will try to bring a lot more of the resource partners into a room in an expo-like session. And we will also have the Dun & Bradstreet consortium.

of, you know, top 50 international law firms who will be donating their time to address one-on-one questions, as long as they’re kept broad and nonspecific, you know, for conflict of interest reasons. And thank you. That’s it.

MR. KRAMER: Great. Tim from Treasury, are you still on the line? Did you have a report?

MR. COLON: I am, thanks. Yeah, I’ll give a quick update. Primarily the two programs that we have at Treasury, the State Small Business Credit Initiative and the SBLF, unfortunately our funding for our program ends in September 2017, but I think we’ve done a lot of work with SBA at the local levels to partner to try to get programs that are going that will be sustainable after our federal funding has -- has ended, but there still will be recycling of federal dollars going out. So, that’s what we’re hopeful at this point.

The other thing that I wanted to bring up, next year, hopefully, we’re going to do a final data crunch of the program, and so we’ll be able to kind of track what the veteran participation was. It wasn’t required for states to track that by the statute or anything, but we were working with some states that had some better ability, and they were able to track some of that. So, we hope to have that to probably report to you next year.

MR. KRAMER: Okay, thank you very much. I think Barb has another brief update, and then I’ve got some brief closing remarks and we can all get out of here.

MS. CARSON: I’ll make it quick. I forgot to bring this up, and I did -- thank you, Davy, for introducing it. The Blue Star Families look at military spouse unemployment and interest in entrepreneurship, so I’m just quickly going to give you some facts, and there may be things to do with it.

Before I say anything on that, however, I did want to remind us all that as we look at these recommendations, we are -- there’s a great focus on procurement. Some agencies that are represented here, that is their primary focus; however, that’s only -- that’s less than 10 percent of the veteran entrepreneurs and small business owners in the United States.

So, I will also be interested in thinking about a representation on this Task Force. If your agency is so large that you have different bureaus or administrations where there are other equities for veteran economic opportunity or policy that perhaps we find a way to wrap those in. And looking at the military spouse is one of those areas that I could draw that picture for you.

So, the all-volunteer force, when it began, one income was generally enough for a family. That is no longer the case for most of us in the United States, and it’s especially challenging for military families that relocate rather frequently. And my voice will get -- you know, this is meaningful to me as continuing to serve as a Reservist, and I’m also a military spouse for 19 years, and I had a business in Okinawa. This is where it all comes together for me, so thanks for letting me have just 90 more seconds.

The unemployment rate for military spouses is about one and a half times what it is for the civilian equivalent person with education. Ninety percent of military spouses are women. It varies every weekend after a marriage, you know, but there are about $64,000 military spouses at this time, and the impact to the economy of having these spouses underemployed or unemployed is about -- it’s between $710 million and $1 billion. I’d like to see that refined. With a little help from Labor, we’re working at triangulating to fully understand that.

On one different slide of this study -- and it’s not just one study, this is Bureau of Labor
Statistics and other sources, as well -- these spouses want to be entrepreneurs. We see them attending Boots to Business when services are amenable to making those seats available for them. One in four says that that’s what they would want to do. Many of them face barriers in license and credentialing when they move. They lose things. Business formation also, they have questions. So, we really do think there is a difference, that we do need to look at the military spouse employment and self-employment as a separate entity than veteran because they have different -- they have a different statute, laws, policies around them. Some agencies can’t do more, but some can, and they might just not be exercising it fully at this time. And I also would encourage those 90 percent of those spouses who are women that there are women-owned small business activities and certifications that would benefit them. The Department of Labor has training for displaced workers, which military spouses are in most cases when they are forced to move along with their service member. So, these are things that I will bring up in the future, but I look forward to our further discussion on where we go with recommendations and opportunity for veterans. You know, employment, access to capital for business initiation, and then the availability of customer in the form of government contracts. So, by no means should we rest on our laurels, but at the same time, we should recognize the -- you know, what is out there, the trend lines that are happening, and try to use that momentum to make them even better and get rid of some of the blemishes that might still be on those accomplishments.

So, as we look forward to the next meeting, which will be in September -- I don’t know that we have a date yet on the calendar -- it is September, right? Yeah.

There are two things I’d like to leave you all with between now and then. The first is a bit of the underrun, although maybe not an overt one, issue; then, will be the issue of sustainability and transition. My days are certainly numbered, and after that meeting, I will be on a sort of a quick dissent, probably out of my role here. And I think the last time we had that sort of a gap the Task Force sort of paid for that.

And, so, I will do what I can on my part to make sure that leadership continues at SBA, but I think the best way that we accomplish that is by putting real sort of programs and real sort of efforts in place that just are self-sustaining by that point. And that’s the recommendations. The recommendations need to be thoughtful; the recommendations need to be fresh; the recommendations need to be meaningful.

And I think if between now and then we can put in place a new group of 15 to 20 recommendations that we all sort of believe in and understand, that is the best engine we can do or we can put in place to make sure that this thing sustains itself.

And my last point, my best point is something that Barb preempted because she always has these ideas earlier and better than I do, but that is that we need to open the aperture a bit. We will sit in this meeting and talk about Government programs all day, because that’s our stock and trade and that’s what we do, and that’s important. The extent to which we are doing certification programs or contracting programs and all of that are very important, but that is not the full extent here.

But that’s the limit of our universe to some extent by exposure or whatever, and so I would call upon all members of the Task Force to bring to bear your experiences -- and this especially goes to our partners from outside government -- to really think who’s listening to our meetings and participating.

Thanks.

MR. KRAMER: Well, I’d just like to share a few thoughts here as we close. The first is just an observation that, you know, although we will continue to talk about the frustrations, needs for coordination, all of that, there are some very big numbers happening out there in this space that for all the time you spend in Washington and the Government and where people either trump up big numbers out of things that aren’t really meaningful or, on the other hand, you know, sort of cut down big meaningful numbers by talking about the ways that the perfect is the enemy of the good.

I mean, I think we can see that over the last couple of years we have seen really transformative changes in the vets unemployment numbers. We have seen really significant increases in the amount of funding that we are guaranteeing that are going to vets entrepreneurs. And as Ken sort of outlined there, we’ve seen very significant and steady now achievement when it comes to government contracting going to all small businesses but specifically to service-disabled veteran-owned businesses. These are not trifles. I mean, these are really the pillars on which you would build economic
about what is the experience for vets who are trying to start businesses; what are the obstacles that they are encountering. And if that’s all you bring, we can come up with a recommendation out of that. We can look to target that.

But what I think -- where our blind spot is is we do not have the number of conversations that you all have with vets who are out there trying to do this and what their frustrations are and what their obstacles are. And some of those will involve government programs, and we can try and fix that. Some of those may have nothing to do, at least as a first order, with the Government, but there may be things that we can do to try to address that.

So, I would ask all of us aggressively to be looking for those opportunities when you’re having those engagements, those conversations, and bring those, not just back to this table in three months, but to the conversations that we’ll have in between. I mean, I know that a couple of the members alone identified that in that period they are going to be having very flagship sort of programs, and so really use those as an opportunity to cultivate resources that we can then work from.

So, that’s the task. That is what we will be doing. And, hopefully, three months from now, as with the success we have had along the way the last couple of meetings, we can be here in three months with a pretty good list of recommendations that we will launch forward from there.

So, that’s it. Thank you all for your time and your participation, and we will be in touch.

(Whereupon, at 12:00 p.m., the meeting was adjourned.)
For The Record, Inc.  
(301) 870-8025 - www.ftrinc.net - (800) 921-5555