U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON
VETERANS SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

PUBLIC MEETING

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PROCEEDINGS

(Meeting called to order, 1:05 p.m.)

MS. CARSON: Good afternoon and welcome to the Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development. I’m Barb Carson, the Associate Administrator for the Office of Veteran Business Development here at the U.S. Small Business Administration, and I am pleased to turn the meeting over to Deputy Administrator, the Honorable Allie Leslie to kick us off.

MS. LESLIE: Thank you, Barb, and welcome everyone. Welcome back to SBA, it seems like forever since we last met. Although it was, what, a couple months?

MS. CARSON: Um-hum.

MS. LESLIE: Three months, yeah, so it is forever. Since that time I have had a chance to meet with the deputy secretary of Veterans Affairs and had a very positive meeting with him on collaboration between Small Business Administration and the VA.

One of the big takeaways was we are still not ready to totally take on the CVE, because there is a lot of information that is still outstanding for the Small Business Administration to make a really well-
informed decision on how we can move forward with this to ensure success.

What we don’t want to do is just punt it over the fence, and take it, run with it, and then run right into the ground, so we need to make sure that we have the information, the data to make the right decisions, and to put the program in place so that it will be successful ultimately for both VA and SBA, and also our veterans, our veteran community.

Barb and her team were invited to the Department of Labor to look at how we can work together with them to address licensing and credentialing that affect military families and veterans of veteran-owned small businesses and found new network connections as well with that organization.

MS. CARSON: Um-hum.

MS. LESLIE: So the Department of Labor is key, because they’re looking to get jobs, just like we are looking to get jobs for our veterans, so it’s a great partnership.

I think the next one will be DOE that we’ll need to tap into, because they’re also fundamental in our job market and getting the skills we need at the trade levels. So veterans bring a lot of those skills into the market and so between labor, and education,
and getting the refinement into industry I think could be key going forward.

MS. CARSON: Um-hum.

MS. LESLIE: And today we will get updates from all our members, as normal, and we also have our national ombudsman representative here. Natalie, thank you so much for joining us today. Is Nate also coming or --

MS. DUNCAN: He’s unable to make it today, but he’ll be here tomorrow.

MS. LESLIE: Okay. So we have excellent representation from Natalie, she’s been with the Office of Ombudsman and was actually the acting ombudsman for a period of time before Nate came in as the -- in that role. So as a deputy, Natalie, thank you very much for being here and welcome.

MS. DUNCAN: Thank you.

MS. LESLIE: And last, we had a little homework from our last meeting on getting the ‘15/’16 combined report. We already had the information for FY-‘16. And ‘17 has been very slow in coming in, we have nothing, so please get your information in.

We do not want to be two-years late on this report, especially since the ‘16 report is already a year late. So, please, I ask your cooperation, if you
can go back to your agencies and make sure we get that
information, because I would hate to have to go pay
office calls to your senior leadership.

Okay. Actually, I wouldn’t mind paying the
office calls, but I wouldn’t want this to be a topic of
discussion.

MS. CARSON: Right.

MS. LESLIE: And with that I will turn it over
to Barb with the agenda. Thank you.

MS. CARSON: Thank you very much, ma’am.

We’ll do a little bit of housekeeping before we get
started and do a roll call to make sure we know who is
with us today --

MS. LESLIE: One more.


MS. LESLIE: Sorry, I had one more alibi. I
also met with the commander of the -- the American
Legion, she has so much support for our organization
and we have a partnership with them. We have an MOU
that is -- was it actually signed or --

MS. CARSON: Very soon.

MS. LESLIE: Okay. Very soon to be signed and
that will solidify the partnership. One of the items
that came up during our discussion was the use of the
-- sorry, GI benefits for veteran entrepreneurship.
And at one point I didn’t think that the American Legion was supportive of that, but she is very wholeheartedly supportive. So hopefully when that initiative does resurrect itself, or we resurrect it, somebody resurrects it with Congress, we will see some legislation that supports us.

One of the areas that they focused on was the fact that the GI bill was originally for jobs, it wasn’t necessarily for education, and over time it has gone -- specialized into just education. So if we could take it back to the root intent of the GI bill, then perhaps we’ll be successful. And with the partnership between the American Legion, and Veterans Affairs, and SBA, maybe we can get it through this time. So that’s my alibi, thank you. Now, I did that because I do have a hard stop today.

MS. CARSON: Okay.

MS. LESLIE: So if we’re not done, I will have to leave.

MS. CARSON: I’m glad you brought that up, ma’am. That was fantastic, thank you for that update. And for the American Legion, as always, for your enduring partnership, we appreciate that.

So we will do roll calling. I start in the room and American Legion today is represented by...
MR. LEGHORN: Davy Leghorn.

MS. CARSON: Nice to see you again. General Services Administration.

MS. VAN ABSHER: Elizabeth Van Absher.

MS. CARSON: Department of Defense.

MS. DIAZ: Kasey Diaz.

MS. CARSON: Department of Veteran Affairs.

MS. TORRES: Beth Torres.

MS. CARSON: Department of Labor.

MR. METHENY: Bill Metheny.

MS. CARSON: And do we have on the phone the Office of Management and Budget?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Or Department of Treasury?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: And StreetShares Foundation?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: No?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Okay. Then we’ll proceed. I have a brief update for you. We’ve been doing a lot of work in the past three months of -- of getting ourselves ready for mini-program updates or improvements and a lot of it is due to the recommendations we’ve received from this Interagency
Task Force as well as tomorrow’s, the Advisory Committee on Veteran Business Affairs, so I’m going to go through that. Those of you who are in the room have these slides and those of you who are on the phone, perhaps you can get these by writing veteranstaskforce@SBA.gov.

I’m going to start with the Veterans Business Outreach Center program and last time I told you we had released a funding opportunity on grants.gov. We had great competition, we have over 40 eligible applicants. We have concluded the evaluation process, and we have made recommendations for the deputy administrator’s consideration, and we do expect to announce those by April 1st so that they may begin work on May 1st of this year.

And I will remind you that their primary mission and what they’re goaled against is their participation in transition assistance, that is by statute their primary role and we count on them to cover -- last year we had 17,000 participants in the Boots to Business program at over 200 military installations around the world, so it’s a big job. And the VBOCs is not in it alone, but they are the -- the lead resource partner for that.

We continue to encourage other resource
partners, including the Women’s Business Centers, Small Business Development Centers, and SCORE Mentors to join in, and really provide that dynamic instruction, and introduce the participants to all the resources available in the Federal Government. This is their gateway, this is where they go from idea, to check with the feasibility, and hopefully to launch. So those VBOCs will be announced soon and we look forward do to introducing you to them in summary during our June meeting.

I also am pleased to tell you that the Veteran Federal Procurement Entrepreneurship Training Program, which is the sole grantee of the Veteran Institute for Procurement, represented today here by Barbara Ashe, will have its 1,000th graduate and the successes of VIP grads.

(Applause.)

MS. CARSON: Yes, congratulations.

MS. ASHE: Thank you.

MS. CARSON: And the -- the SBA administrator, Linda McMahon, will be present for that momentous occasion. This, as you’ve heard me say before, VIP, has value in the marketplace. Being able to say that one is a VIP graduate is beginning to mean a lot to agencies who are looking to do business with service-
disabled veteran-owned small businesses and veteran-owned small businesses.

So, Barbara, I thank you and your incredible team for the contributions you’ve made and we welcome you at the public comment if there’s anything else you’d like to say.

MS. ASHE: Oh.

MS. CARSON: Would you like, now?

MS. ASHE: Oh, sure. Thank you. Well, I -- I -- you know, I just want to say that -- well, we have agency representation at the VIP Marketplace and we’re going to be reaching out to each of the federal OGS offices and -- and others that are responsible for veterans small business participation with the tool that -- because of SBA’s generous support of VIP, you all get the Marketplace tool at no cost and it’s basically our VIP graduates.

It’s an online searchable engine where you can search for requirements, you can do sources sought, RFIs, and search for capabilities. It’s keyword searchable, so I’m using this as an opportunity just because you’re going to be hearing from me and I think it’s just going to be a great resource tool to you all. They’re already using it to find teaming partners and -- and so -- and the primes are using it to find
subcontracting partners, so -- so more to come. So thank you.

MS. CARSON: Thank you. You know the stats better than I, but if you could speak to the success of VIP graduates on VA VECTOR and G --

MS. ASHE: Oh, yeah.

MS. CARSON: -- GWAC too.

MS. ASHE: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. I’m so excited. So VECTOR was a very large, you know, government-wide acquisition contract that the VA put out for solicitation and over one-third of the VIP -- one-third of the PRIME award recipients were VIP graduates. And I have yet to meet a team that didn’t have a VIP on it, but, you know, it’s harder to find the teaming information.

And we just also got news that the CIO-SP3 was just released, which is a NITAAC and it’s an NIC, a very-large GWAC. And there were nine veteran-owned small businesses and sort of stable veteran-owned small businesses in the small-business down select and out of that nine, six were VIP grads.

MS. CARSON: Um-hum.

MS. ASHE: So we continue to track. This program only works when they win, so it’s important that we track --
MS. CARSON: Right.

MS. ASHE: -- their success, and so -- so that I don’t know if there’s -- there’s others. We track the Alliant and -- and -- and other large where there’s, you know, data that we can, but the -- we -- we see it as a -- a pipeline --

MS. CARSON: Um-hum.

MS. ASHE: -- for -- for the agency’s success.

You’re looking for capable, compliant, and companies with capacity to compete and win, and -- and hopefully that’s what -- and we track to see whether or not that is actually taking place in the marketplace, and so that’s important to not only our veterans, of course, but to -- to the agencies that count on -- on their participation and their performance.

MS. CARSON: Great. Thank you. And we will get the Marketplace information to each of the members here, so that this is --

MS. ASHE: All right.

MS. CARSON: -- another tool in the Marketplace market research tool kit that --

MS. ASHE: Okay.

MS. CARSON: -- we all should have.

MS. ASHE: Great.

MS. CARSON: Thank you so much.
MS. ASHE: Thank you.

MS. CARSON: All right. I’m going to move on a couple slides ahead to talk about Boots to Business. I believe I mentioned this before, but this is a year where we looked at our curriculum and did some refreshes on things that could be added that we hadn’t touched on at all. And then improvements on places where we saw participants kind of getting hung-up in the economic model of business was one of those, so we’ve refined some of the modules, also added in some USDA content as we look at rural entrepreneurs.

And many veterans go back to the places they came from. And still variance on exactly how many are going back to rural areas, but between 30 and 40 percent we think are in that classified -- it’s not a classified space, but what USDA calls a rural area and we need to serve those entrepreneurs. So we are connecting them with the resources that both SBA and USDA can provide to help them get started and grow in their communities and continue to serve, and as you’ve heard me say, by creating economic opportunity for themselves and hopefully employ others too.

We also heard a lot of feedback on -- it’s a great introduction, but I really was hoping for more information, so we’ve added some -- we’re in the
process of approving some specialty tracks that once they take the two-day introduction there are, of course, the opportunity to connect locally with those recourse partners of SBA, but there are two online tracks, one offered by Mississippi State University, the other offered by Cornell University in coordination with Syracuse University, those are for folks who are closer to launch.

It really will use the lean business principles, take a look at what your business plan is, actually interact with customers, and it’s all guided with mentors. It’s really a fantastic follow-on to get people closer to that business start. What we heard was, okay, that’s good general information, but I’d really like more on federal contracting, franchise, manufacturing, technology, service industry, and then a place where SBA has a lighter touch with social enterprise.

So we do hear a lot that veterans would like to continue serving their brothers and sisters in arms, many of them think it’s going to be through a nonprofit. That is not something where SBA engages directly, but often you can -- there are things you can do, like a B Corp where you are setting up your business to have a social impact, so we’re looking at
that specialty track, not yet released, these all have
to be developed.

But if you are finding other areas where
you’re getting feedback, we welcome that feedback here
and we always want to hear from veterans and members of
the American Legion, for example. If you’re hearing of
places from your folks, we need to get outside the D.C.
bubble. It’s not all about procurement, although
that’s important. Where else can we be serving, what
can we prepare people for?

So then moving on to some of the collaboration
that’s taken place in the last three months, that was
on the same slide. As the deputy administrator
mentioned, that was a great meeting with the new
American Legion Commander, Rohan, she’ll be with us for
a year. She -- her term ends in August, well, so we’ve
got to get -- a lot to get done while she’s here with
us and the executive director came as well.

American Legion, for those who don’t know, was
with us from the ideation of Boots to Business, and
then recognized that we should be providing something
like this to veterans of every era, and stood by us for
Boots to Business Reboot, and generously offered venues
throughout the nation and American Legion chapters, or
they worked with us, to bring that curriculum out to
veterans of all eras, so we -- that strategic alliance memorandum we’re going to sign soon will reinforce this continuing collaboration.

As the deputy administrator mentioned, we are going to look again at the GI bill and how it may be used potentially for self-employment.

(Telephone recording.)

TELECONFERENCE RECORDING: Welcome to teleconference service.

MS. CARSON: We’re going to pause for a moment.

TELECONFERENCE RECORDING: Please enter your access code followed by the pound sign.

(Number entered.)

MS. LESLIE: Maybe why we didn’t have anybody online.

MS. CARSON: Um-hum, I’ll do another roll call.

TELECONFERENCE RECORDING: To join the conference as the host, press star.

(Number entered.)

TELECONFERENCE RECORDING: Please enter your code password followed by the pound sign.

(Number entered.)

TELECONFERENCE RECORDING: There are five
participants on the call, including you. You’re joining your conference as a host. For a menu of available commands, press star, pound.

(Number entered.)

MS. CARSON: Now that we have an active phone line, I am going to pause, and check, and see who’s joined us on the phone. Do we have anyone from the Office of Management and Budget?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Okay. Department of Treasury?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: StreetShares Foundation?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Or any other guests that would like to identify themselves?

MS. BARMBY: Hi. Good afternoon, it’s Laura Barmby at the U.S. Department of Commerce, a commercial service.

MS. CARSON: Thanks for joining us.

MS. BARMBY: Thank you.

MR. MUFTARI: Hi, this is Murat Muftari from the Commerce Department, also joining with the Vets Go Global initiative.

MS. CARSON: I’m glad you could join us and when we get -- after we finish the agency reports, I’d
be thrilled if you would say a few words about Vets Go Global, so I’ll come back to you.

MR. MUFTARI: Sure.

MS. CARSON: I would also want you to know that Barbara Ashe, of Veterans Institute for Procurement, is here in the room as well, maybe some synergy there.

MR. MUFTARI: Sure.

MS. CARSON: Thanks. Anyone else on the phone?


MS. CARSON: Hi, Maggie, thanks for joining us.

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: All right.

MS. CARSON: All right.

MR. GREEN: I’m Jim Green, Department of Energy OSDBU office.

MS. CARSON: Is that Mr. Green at Department of Energy?

MR. GREEN: Correct.

MS. CARSON: Thank you so much. Okay. We’re moving on to finishing the collaboration notes with American Legion. Another topic I -- that came up, and please correct me if I’m mistaken, ma’am, but the -- we
have so much energy and statutory guidance behind the
transition, and the ideation, and feasibility, and
launch, but what happens after that? What happens
after we’ve led people to this idea and they’re ready
to scale and grow?

There are some existing programs within SBA,
one is Emerging Leaders, but there’s increasing
interest in having a veteran-focused scaling program
and whether we would do that within the SBA construct,
or it’s something that the American Legion would
propose and we support, or it’s something to be
discussed. Do you have anything else you’d want to add
on that point?

MR. LEGHORN: Not right now.

MS. CARSON: Not at this time. Okay. I’d
love to come back in June, and see, and let everybody
know where we are with that. For the Department of
Defense we have a great relationship with the deputy
assistant secretary, public affairs, Mr. Summers, and
he was a former executive here at the U.S. Small
Business Administration.

So we spent time there learning about the new
initiatives, this is military, really trying to connect
the American people with -- especially with their Guard
and Reserve members, people who are next door to you,
your neighbor, and you may not even know they served, want them to know about the contributions that they make to the community, and also, you know, know that they are serving their nation in uniform as well, SBA absolutely has a part in this.

Those Guard and Reserve folks are quite entrepreneurial and we don’t have a -- a channel to reach them directly. It’s very hard to find information about who is in that population, so we are looking forward to the campaign to help support it and bring forth those entrepreneurs and the resources that are available to them through this partnership with DOD.

Of course we’re also doing transition assistance and we have worked with the Military Spouse Employment Partnership as well within DOD. So if you see other opportunities for us, just let me know, but that’s where we are so far.

For Department of Veteran Affairs we will soon have an agreement to better connect our field resources for vocational rehabilitation and employment. There are many veterans who are eligible for self-employment benefits there and SBA has the technical assistance to advise them and assist in getting started. So the goal is to make sure that we understand each other’s
eligibility, so that we can refer clients across in a more uniform way.

There are some amazing things that are happening already in places around the United States, we’d like to make it more consistent so that veterans have a great connected experience. And I think you covered the other topics --

MS. LESLIE: Um-hum.

MS. CARSON: -- already, ma’am, on VA. And then with Department of Labor, Bill Metheny, thank you so much. He brought us in for something I’d never heard of, we love acronyms, AT --

MR. METHENY: Oh.

MS. CARSON: -- ATVET, right?

MR. METHENY: Yes.

MS. CARSON: All Things Veteran. So people from every kind of office in the Department of Labor came together to listen to an SBA update and the connections that just popped on, “Oh, you have that data, that would be really helpful; yes, we think we could share that; you have a program, I see the connection,” so a lot that we can do.

And I’m incredibly grateful the Department of Labor hasn’t left Small Business out when you consider things that we want to participate in, like the HIRE
Vets Medallion, and recognizing employers regardless of their size who have made it an important priority to hire veterans, so thank you for that, Bill.

Finally, our last slide is looking ahead at what we will have in June. National Veterans Small Business Week, the planning and the theme development is going on now. We will tie it closely to SBA’s National Small Business Week, which is April 29 to the 5th of May, so look for more on that.

We really want to encourage each agency to highlight what you’re doing with veterans, and especially veteran small business, in November, so I’m giving you plenty of warning and we’ll come back with some more ideas for you in June to firm that up.

For Boots to Business, it’s a revolving outcome survey. Once people have attended at the one-year point, they get a survey and said what’s happened with you now, have you decided to go into business, and more. So we -- although we get the results all the time, we do try to report out on that every third quarter, so I hope to have that completed and ready for public release by our next meeting.

We’re also doing a bottom-up review, everything that we’ve learned in the past four years about Boots to Business Reboot, which is the same
curriculum, on installation, we provide it to veterans of all eras, are the things that we should be doing differently. Is that population different than the service member who’s in the midst of transitioning? Yes, we know that now, so what would we change? So we’d like to provide you an update on that as well.

And finally, the Veterans Business Outreach Centers will be up and running by the time we next meet and so we will give you a summary of who they are, where they are, and look for connections between your agencies and our VBOCs where it makes sense.

And the last one, we -- VBOC 2.0. We have been looking at how -- with such a lean resource, there are only 20 right now, and there may be 22 after this competition is done. How in the world are we going to serve all the veterans of the United States who are interested in self-employment? We need better tools, we need ways to refer clients and stay connected to them.

There are platforms that do this for us and can do them, so we’ve been testing those over the last year. We’re looking for ways that others can join us in that collaboration. So let’s not go make, you know, something super special that only SBA can touch, that wouldn’t be a good way to move forward.
So I really want your feedback on where we’re headed. This isn’t like the cake will be finally baked, it’s just that we’re further along and have something to share and look forward to hearing how you think you can collaborate with us more once we roll this out.

That is all on the Office of Veterans Business Development updates. I’m now going to turn it over to my colleague, Natalie Duncan, who is here from the National Ombudsman Office.

MS. DUNCAN: Thank you, Barb. And is this working?

MS. CARSON: Push the face. The face.

MR. METHENY: This one.

MS. DUNCAN: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Barb, and thank you Deputy Administrator for inviting me to join you today. And good afternoon everyone, it’s a privilege to be with all of you. Veterans’ issues are near and dear to my heart as someone who has married into an all-Navy family and has served six years in the Department of the Army, including a tour of duty working for the -- the CG of TRADOC where I had an opportunity to work with Bill.

MR. METHENY: Um-hum.

MS. DUNCAN: So it’s really great to be with
all of you. So in her visits across the country to
visit with 600-plus small businesses across, you know,
31 states, the SBA administrator has highlighted the
ways in which the large volume of federal, state, and
local regulations really create an untenable
environment for small businesses.

So she has met with many businesses that say,
look, we’re not saying that we don’t need regulations
to protect the -- the environment, workers, and the
American people, but rather it’s the duplicative
compliance. And it’s really about sheer volume, and
the complexity, and cost associated with regulatory
compliance, that’s the real issue.

And so in my own travels across the country,
small business owners and lenders have voiced similar
concerns to me, and have provided me with specific
directives of how regulatory actions taken by federal
agencies have hurt them, and in some cases have even
driven them out of business.

So I’d like to just highlight for a few
moments the work of the National Ombudsman’s Office and
how we assist small businesses, including veterans-
owned small business, and then I’d be happy to take any
questions that you may have either at the end or you
can feel free to break in so we can make it a more
interactive discussion.

Slide three, please. So National Ombudsman really serves as a champion for small businesses representing their interests before federal agencies like yours in resolving regulatory disputes between the two.

So the office was established 21 years ago by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996 and is really charged with helping small business when they encounter instances of excessive unfair regulatory enforcement actions taken against them, and by that, I mean excessive fines, penalties, inspections, investigations, audits, and -- and that's where we are able to be of help to small business, including veteran small businesses. And as a practical matter, even though this is not necessarily in our original jurisdiction, we have accepted a number of cases that involve, you know, federal contracting.

So oftentimes we do get cases from small business veteran owners who have issues with, let's say, resolving a contracting dispute with the VA or components within DOD, and so we are there to be able to intervene, for instance, in issues where it -- in situations where they have performed work, but have not been paid for their services, and -- and they haven't
the hearings are crickets when they interface with the CO and so it -- when it comes to things like, you know, protest.

That’s sort of like got a -- it’s on a course of its own and so -- and there is avenues of redress that are sort of separate and so we don’t really get into those, but in the -- the example I gave you, those are instances where we are of help to small businesses.

So as the deputy administrator mentioned, Nat Miller was appointed as the national ombudsman back in September and he also is dual-hatted as our regulatory reform officer, that was established as part of the executive order by the President back in February of last year, and so he’s got a legal background, prior experience in -- in trade associations, and worked on the hill, and so really does have a real understanding of the regulator landscape.

Please turn to slide four. We fulfill our mission to small business owners by learning about the regulatory enforcement concerns through the -- the outreach that we conduct in terms of hearings, and roundtables, and on panel discussions, and other opportunities where really our goal is to raise awareness, because the only way we can help small businesses is if they know about us. And so we work
pretty actively to get in front of small businesses, so
that they are aware of our value proposition.

And we solicit and respond to comments and
complaints and pay attention to systemic issues that
impact large groups of small businesses, or entire
industries, or geographic regions and raise those
issues that otherwise would fall through the cracks.
And they may not sort of be issues that raise to the
level of being on the front page of the Washington
Post, but they are very important to small businesses,
because to them it’s about the bottom line.

And oftentimes those issues just don’t sort of
make it, and so we kind of shine a spotlight on those
issues and bring them to attention, to the attention of
federal regulators as through -- as well as to Congress
through the publication of our annual report and in
less sort of formal means, because they do --
oftentimes members of Congress really do have a real
interest in making sure that issues that are inhibiting
small business growth are resolved.

And so many people have asked about, sort of
-- how many of you have heard about the SBA’s Office of
Advocacy? So -- and so it’s -- it’s always a -- a --
kind of a -- a point of confusion that -- amongst even
people, sort of, in -- that are really in the know and
that. And we work very, very closely with them, because we consider them our partners. And in terms of how we kind of segment our responsibilities, they really work on -- in a nutshell, sort of like on the front end of regulations.

So as regulations are being shaped and they are not yet on the books, but there is concerns that small businesses have about the economic impacts and so forth, it will go to the Office of Advocacy to raise those concerns and to help shape the regulations. And once they’re in effect, we can help on the back end in terms of working with them to address instances where enforcement actions have been taken, like the examples I gave you earlier.

So some of the -- the cases in terms of, you know, last year that were most frequent were ones we got from or pertaining to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services that were from small business durable medical equipment providers. We -- we got contracting issues, we got issues around, you know, OSHA and, you know, wage an hour, as well as, you know, IRA type issues. There’s a whole spectrum, but those are some of the more common in recent times.

And so we build -- I think in terms of what we’d look to do as -- we’d -- we’d look to build
relationships and -- slide five, and breakdown barriers between small businesses and the Federal Government, and through our work we’ve achieved tangible results for small businesses in terms of cost and time savings in the form of whether it’s reduced fines, or penalties, or waivers, or reversals of decisions.

And I can’t promise it in every instance we are able to obtain a favorable outcome, but what we do is look to champion this cause of small businesses and ensure that the outcome is fair, and how we do that is we get a, sort of, independent third-party higher-level review of the enforcement actions that are taken usually by an inspector or an investigator and do so in a way where it’s neutral and non-retaliatory for the small business. Slide six, please. Any questions so far?

(No response.)

MS. DUNCAN: So I’d like to just kind of highlight very briefly a few regulatory levers that we use to effectuate fair and favorable outcomes on behalf of small business. Slide seven. So in terms of issue resolution, we -- we have a formal process by which small businesses can file complaints and comments with our office.

Comments is sort of a euphemism, but -- and we
can -- and -- and they can do that through our website or through other means, by paper, et cetera, and really the whole notion behind it is we first want to get an authorization from them to proceed in contacting the federal agencies on their behalf and then also have an opportunity for them to document the issues, because -- and I would be the first to admit that I am not an encyclopedia on regulations, and so oftentimes these issues are exquisitely complex, and they’re -- and some of them are very particularized to a particular small business or industry.

And so -- so the best way to get agencies to, you know, sort of get right to the heart of the issue is if -- that the small businesses document it and so that they can easily reference it, and understand what is the issue, and what is the outcome that they’re looking for.

MS. LESLIE: Hey, Natalie?

MS. DUNCAN: Uh-huh?

MS. LESLIE: Question.

MS. DUNCAN: Sure.

MS. LESLIE: On the issue or on any of these do you track them by socio-economic breakdown?

MS. DUNCAN: (No response.)

MS. LESLIE: So, in other words, would you
know veterans compared to other populations, are they more, are they less, or --

MS. DUNCAN: So that’s -- that’s a very good question. In fact, last year when I briefed the advisory board there were members that asked a -- a very similar question. So the -- with our current case-management system we don’t have the ability to do that and so what we have done is -- I understand that the -- the CIO is -- does not want individual FedRAMP offices to come up with their own standalone case management systems, because we’re operating under the -- one that’s very, very legacy, put it that way.

MS. LESLIE: Okay.

MS. DUNCAN: And -- and so we put the need for data reporting based on, sort of, segmentation of, you know, veterans, women, or different groups in as a requirement, as they’re looking to procure a new enterprise-wide case management system, but we currently don’t have the capability.

MS. LESLIE: Okay. Thank you.

MS. DUNCAN: The other thing that we’re looking to do is -- and -- and so this is to kind of fulfill the administrator’s challenge that every office operates more effectively and efficiently, is that I am getting -- working with the team to look at our comment
form in terms of how can we restructure it to make it one.

I think from a reporting capability standpoint we’d be able to -- to track, you know, how many are disabled vets, vets, because on the front end -- you know, if we build a system on the back end, we have to ask for that information, and -- and so we’re going to redesign the form to -- to encompass that kind of a tracking. So in terms of -- any other questions on our comment process?

(No response.)

MS. DUNCAN: So what we do is we commit to small businesses that within four business days of receipt of a complete package we will acknowledge the receipt and send off their issue to the federal agency. And in each of your agencies we do have points of contact either in the OSDBU office or in some cases it’s a regulator within, let’s say, OGC, so it’s different depending on the agency and -- and that will -- and we will request a review within 30 business days. In cases where there’s a more expedited need, we will ask for a 10 or 15-day review and get back to them shortly thereafter.

So next slide, please. By -- and so that’s a copy of our comment form as it currently stands. And
so, again, I think we want to keep it one page, because we don’t want to impose undue burdens on small businesses when we ask them for too much information, but we want to capture what we need and to get to the essence.

Slide nine, please. So in terms of one thing that we do -- one of the things that we do to hold federal agencies accountable is we do in our annual report to Congress and we -- we just had our last one just published, we do a federal agencies’ rating, so we will rate them based on their compliance with the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act based on the quality and timeliness of their responses.

And we are also looking -- based on some legislative proposals that are on the table, we’re also looking to take a hard look at the ratings’ criteria and see what we can do to make it more robust in terms of additional criteria, and that’s something that we will socialize with the agencies when we bring them together here for an interagency summit on the 23rd of March.

And next slide, please. So in terms of, you know, outreach, which I’d referenced earlier, we look to hear from small businesses out in the field. Across, and by statute, we -- we are required to go
across all of 10 regions of SBA’s 10 regions to conduct outreach and to -- to really kind of expand, I think, our -- our impact across small businesses of different industries, and across different geographies, and we also do that through hosting of formal hearings to -- where small business and trade associations that represent them have an opportunity to testify formally about the issues and go on record before members of Congress, congressional staff, as well as federal agencies who send their representatives to the table to learn about these issues.

And -- and so it’s a way to -- it’s a unique platform really to raise the visibility of their issues to people on the hill, because oftentimes with regulatory issues it’s not as if you can sort of press a button and one day they’re resolved, but rather it takes the exertion of pressure from multiple directions, and a real sort of a persistence, and resiliency in order to get things to -- to happen.

And oftentimes there’s a lot of, sort of, external factors that are beyond one’s control, any one small business control, or any agency control in order for the stars and moon to align and for change to happen, so we really encourage small businesses to continue to beat the drum to raise the visibility of
those issues and take a guerilla approach to, you know, get their concerns voiced through every channel possible.

Next slide, please. Please. So we also have board members. Like the -- the boards that Barb has for veterans, we also have regulatory fairness boards where -- that -- that represent the concerns of small businesses across industries and geographies and so they help us to be sort of our eyes, and ears, and our listening posts out in the field to bring those concerns to our attention. Next slide, please.

MS. CARSON: Natalie, may --

MS. DUNCAN: Yes?

MS. CARSON: -- I ask you to possibly then talk about eligibility and how you find --

MS. DUNCAN: Sure.

MS. CARSON: -- those members of those boards?

MS. DUNCAN: Absolutely. And so, yeah, I wanted to relay it at the -- at the very end, but I’ll do it right now.

MS. CARSON: Oh, sorry.

MS. DUNCAN: Is to -- no, no, this is good. Is to -- to make and ask of those of you who -- you know, if you know of small businesses, they -- they need to be small business owners or operators, and we
-- we don’t really have qualifications in terms of, let’s say, you know, education standards or anything like that, but it’s really what we look to do is build a -- a board that is diverse in terms of industry, in terms of thought, in terms of geographies, and really are representatives of small businesses just across kind of different domains, and so -- and if there -- if there are people here who work with small businesses in the veterans’ communities who have interest, please let me know and I will certainly follow up with them.

So that’s a picture of our board where the deputy came and, you know, spoke with our board last time in August.

MS. LESLIE: And that was one of my -- in fact, that was my --

MS. DUNCAN: Your first.

MS. LESLIE: -- very first engagement.

MS. DUNCAN: Your first engagement. Official engagement at SBA.

MS. LESLIE: Um-hum.

MS. DUNCAN: So and the people we look for really are --

MS. LESLIE: Right.

MS. DUNCAN: -- people who, I think, have a real interest, and passion, and knowledge about
regulatory issues and they have networks, professional networks, sort of, across -- meaning people who kind of are civically engaged and really, I think, have their ears to the grounds in terms of understanding what are the -- the issues impacting their industry or impacting those in, let’s say, you know, the Pittsburgh area, and so -- but beyond that it’s people who -- who do -- can connect the dots.

So if there are issues that may be in their region in particular, but -- but may have sort of a national impact, they can work sort of across boundaries with other board members to get those resolved then with us, so they’re a great conduit and a great resource for us.

So -- so I think, you know, I’m running short on time, so I don’t really want to go into, you know, all the slides, but I will just very, very quickly mention that working with federal agencies is really key, because they, first of all, have helped us with identifying and expanding our reach to a greater number of small businesses by inviting us to their outreach events.

And also I’ve worked along with Nate to breakdown barriers and build trust with federal agencies to sort of grease the wheels, so that we could
get complex issues resolved on behalf of small businesses.

And then, you know, next slide, it’s just in terms of our -- FY-’17 sort of looking back, I think some of our greatest accomplishments include -- just in terms of the -- the volume of outreach that we’ve done, you really do need to generate that level of activity in order to be able to generate more awareness that leads to people to file complaints with us.

And last year we had the highest in the decade in terms of complaints filed against regulators and so we had volume of, you know, 460, and I think a lot of it, even though it’s not directly -- there’s no -- not a causation relation, but there’s a correlation as a -- I think the more we raise awareness and we’re out there, the more we are able to get people to come to us seeking our assistance.

And this year, you know, next slide, we’re continuing to do more of that and leveraging also, you know, technology in -- oh, and this is what we did last year, so next slide. In terms of this year, you know, what we’re doing is a lot of work in just using technology to get to an even higher number of small businesses across different industries. So through webinars we’ve reached out to, you know, like customs
brokers, to -- to women entrepreneurs, to -- to just
all sort of different people, in addition to, sort of,
face-to-face contact, which will always be valuable.

And so in terms of what we plan to do, I think
what’s important from -- for this group’s, is -- is
that, you know, like, in terms of some of the things
that we talked about earlier, was the group raised to
my attention last year the -- in terms of, like,
understanding kind of how much of the help that we
provide is really directed at veterans or disabled
veterans, that’s something that we’ll be able to have
finer-tuned understanding once we revise our --
redesign our comment form as well as are able to get
this enterprise-wide system.

And also the other hot issue that I know Barb
has brought to -- to our attention, as well as board
members, and that pertain directly to veterans is DOD
has a -- a cybersecurity reporting requirement that was
made effective January 1st of 2018 and so small
businesses are really kind of scrambling to comply.

This is with -- it’s called the NIST 800-171
and -- and so I think currently DOD does have some
resources available, in fact -- in fact they have a
whole website, but -- but from talking to a number of
small business owners, trade association leaders, I
think the sense is, you know, 170-page documents, it’s very dense, it’s very hard for small business to, you know, comprehend as to what -- what it means to them and what actions they particularly need to take.

So to that end I’m working with Dr. Galvin’s office, and -- and with you, Kasey, and -- and Ted to -- I think one is on the 15th of March where I’m doing a -- it’s sort of a virtual roundtable with NSBA, the National Small Business Association, and I just got confirmation from -- from them this morning.

I mentioned to them that I was meeting with this group and that if there’s people who are interested they’ve extended an invite for you guys as well as the veteran advocacy groups tomorrow to join in that call where, I think, it -- Dr. Galvin’s team will have a -- a subject-matter expert to address those concerns and then we will work with them to kind of put something together to make it more user friendly for small businesses to, you know, understand, these are contractors, in terms of how they need to comply as well as how their subcontractors are complying.

It really is an issue, because I’ve heard from veterans’ groups that, like, there’s a -- a whole cottage industry springing up of, like, people that are charging, like, $40,000 to -- you know, alleging to,
you know, help small businesses to comply, but it's --
I think we just need to work together to, you know,
come up with something that's, you know, easy to
understand so they need to know what they need to do.
So --

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: Hi, this is Maggie.

MS. DUNCAN: -- yes.

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: And I'm sorry, I'm not
able to access your slides and contact information, but
this is an issue very near and dear to my heart right
now and I would very much like to participate.

MS. DUNCAN: Sure.

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: Barbara, can I e-mail
you to share her contact info with me for that meeting
tomorrow or what's the best way here?

MS. CARSON: Absolutely. Please do and I'll
connect you with Natalie.

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: Okay.

MS. CARSON: Thanks.

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: Thank you.

MS. CARSON: Sure.

MS. DUNCAN: Thank you. So, in closing I just
want to say, you know, thank you again for your -- for
your time. And if you are aware of any small business
owners that have regulatory issue, please send them our
way. And if you know of people who may be interested in serving as a board member, please let us know as well. And our contact information is on this last slide, slide 18.

Any questions or -- I’m -- I’m glad to hear that that’s -- that, you know, issue is something that we’re -- it’s -- it’s something that is important to you and -- and we will work with DOD in a way to address it.

MS. CARSON: Thank you. And for those who are on the phone, the email address is ombudsman@sba.gov. Maggie, you’re so welcome to contact me, but that is a way to get in touch with Natalie and her team right away.

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: Perfect. Thank you. Just -- just related to that, GSA is in the process of issuing regulation following DOD’s cybersecurity requirements, so it’s going to impact a whole lot more contractors than just DOD.

MS. LESLIE: Have we looked at what the cost of the contractors is to implement that, because I remember years ago when we started, when this first came about, this legislation -- legislation with the regulation, it was severely limiting competition, because particularly small businesses could not --
MS. DUNCAN: Um-hum.

MS. LESLIE: -- get the -- they didn’t have the funding to implement the restrictions and it was just so costly it was driving them out of business.

MS. DUNCAN: So, Kasey, do you have any insight into that?

MS. DIAZ: (No response.)

MS. DUNCAN: Like, have you guys done any kind of economic impact studies or --

MS. DIAZ: I don’t have that information.

MS. DUNCAN: Okay.

MS. DIAZ: I would have -- definitely can take it back to the subject-matter expert and get some information.

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: I can share personally, but I don’t know the study.

MR. DODDS: It’s usually at the beginning of the rule you have to do regulatory flexibility kind of analysis and things like that, so I suspect that it was done, but we -- we could take a look --

MS. DUNCAN: Well, actually --

MR. DODDS: -- at the rule itself.

MS. DUNCAN: -- I’m sorry. I’m sorry. So actually what Ted mentioned to me sort of on the back end is that the -- the -- it’s actually written into
the contract. So if you don’t comply, it’s considered a breach of contract, but that there’s no cost in terms of the penalty. So I know you’re asking sort of a broader question --

MS. LESLIE: Okay. So it’s in --

MS. DUNCAN: -- which I --

MS. LESLIE: -- the contract --

MS. DUNCAN: -- don’t have --

MS. LESLIE: -- with the --

MS. DUNCAN: -- the answer to.

MS. LESLIE: -- idea that they’re going to become compliant. If they’re not compliant, because they can’t afford it, then they get terminated. So --

MS. DUNCAN: That’s my --

MS. LESLIE: -- I mean, it --

MS. DUNCAN: -- understanding --

MS. LESLIE: -- it doesn’t --

MS. DUNCAN: -- based on --

MS. LESLIE: -- sound like --

MS. DUNCAN: -- what --

MS. LESLIE: -- a bad deal.

MS. DUNCAN: -- what Ted -- from Kasey and Dr. Galvin’s team mentioned, so is that your understanding?

MS. DIAZ: My understanding also is that they can come up with a plan for how to comply, and so I
guess they put a timeline together and they -- they
work towards that. So it’s not like if you don’t have
it right away it’s a penalty of you lose your contract,
but it’s -- you identify the areas that you still are
working on and then you work towards complying.

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: So just so you guys
know as perspective, Microsoft is not supporting small
businesses with the cybersecurity compliance, so we had
-- Office 365, for example, is a very common platform
that small businesses operate on and that is not
FedRAMP certified. So we can’t afford to have a 5,000-
user license Microsoft account to be on the Microsoft
FedRAMP platform, so we had to move everything off
Microsoft and host it ourselves just to kind of connect
what we’re talking about here. It’s significant, and
that’s where --

MS. DUNCAN: And thank --

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: -- I’m going --

MS. DUNCAN: -- you for --

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: -- to talk to you now
again, participate on that committee.

MS. DUNCAN: -- thank you for -- for that
input and so I -- I think I’m confident that -- that,
yeah, your office really does have some good material
that’s just, I think, at this point a lot of people
don’t know about it and so what they’re doing, based on what I’m hearing too, is that they’re kind of filling in the gaps and they ask more and more questions. So -- so, for instance, this -- this deal about the action plan, sort of the next question on their mind was, well, what happens in that gap year from the time you -- you start working on it to the time you complete it, are you going to get penalized, so -- so just a lot of the unknowns is kind of causing them to -- anxiety, to have anxiety.

And so I think what we want to do is really kind of address the questions less from a compliance perspective, but more from the standpoint of addressing sort of the -- the anxieties of the small business by sort of -- you know, sort of allaying the fear that, well, maybe within this year it’s -- it’s not like they’re going to be handcuffed or -- you know, so that kind of thing.

MR. BLUM: Can I -- can I just ask real quick, to -- obviously, this is one area of great interest --

MS. DUNCAN: Um-hum.

MR. BLUM: -- to small business. In your -- in your analysis of the 460 cases --

MS. DUNCAN: Um-hum.

MR. BLUM: -- does your report break out,
like, areas where the complaints are coming from?

MS. DUNCAN: (No response.)

MR. BLUM: So, like, do you --

MS. DUNCAN: Yes.

MR. BLUM: -- know what percentage of them involve government contracts?

MS. DUNCAN: We -- we do. So, meaning we do break it out, so our systems are not great, but we will -- but what we do is -- like, our case managers actually have to, you know, manually tabulate.

MR. BLUM: The -- the --

MS. DUNCAN: So in terms of -- so in terms of, like -- what were you going to say?

MR. BLUM: The -- the reason I was asking is over the last several years we have tried to improve tools that we use to get vendor feedback. We have the initiative called Acquisition 360, which is --

MS. DUNCAN: Um-hum.

MR. BLUM: -- basically an online survey tool that --

MS. DUNCAN: Um-hum.

MR. BLUM: -- we encourage agencies to use. So if they complete an acquisition, vendors -- unsuccessful vendors, those that bid and lost, those that didn’t even bid. Even a winning vendor can get --
you know, provide feedback on their experiences with -- with the acquisition. So if this is another source of information, I think we would be interested to, you know, figure out where we can inform our own policy improvements.

MS. DUNCAN: Yes, we -- we can certainly look into that. So, for instance, in FY-'16 we had -- this is before my time, but we had 316 cases of which there was, you know, 190 of them were non-enforcement. So -- so the contracting ones would be a subset within a one-year aim.

MR. BLUM: Okay.

MS. CARSON: Are there any other questions for Natalie?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Natalie, thanks for your time.

MS. DUNCAN: Thank you.

MS. CARSON: And, Maggie, thanks, we appreciate your -- what is your experience and hope that you’ll share details with the Ombudsman’s Office. And, Matthew, I do want to make sure when we have resources that are available, like Acquisition 360, that it’s a reminder to us that we can share that information. Many of us have channels and we should use those.
MR. BLUM: Okay.

MS. CARSON: And so I will look to you for information on that so we can share through our networks. And then also the Department of Defense and your resources, especially following your meeting, anything that we can get out to the community so that they don’t believe -- we’ve seen it at FDA where people have believed as business owners they needed to pay someone to help them get certification, that is really not the case. I think we’re just running into that potentially here and there’s a lot we can do to help business owners.

So our next speaker today is my colleague, Ken Dodds, from the Office of Government Contracting and Business Development, welcome.

MS. LESLIE: And, Ken, as much as I would love to sit through this, unfortunately I’m pressed for time, so I’m --

MR. DODDS: Sure. Sure, I understand.

MS. LESLIE: -- thank you.

MR. DODDS: I’m not going to just sort of go over the slides that were provided to you today, we’re going to go over them tomorrow at the advisory group. Actually, Chris -- Chris Clarke is going to go over -- over them from the Office of General Counsel, but I
will update you on some of the other rules, and regulations, and laws that have to do with small business since the last time we spoke.

But the -- the slides and the rule have been provided to you and they are ventures to service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses, because by law we have to work with the VA to come up with a joint ownership and control definition for service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses, and so we work with the VA. And we finally published a rule at the end of January to get comments on what it means to be owned and controlled by a service-disabled veteran-owned veteran, and that -- those rules are open for public comment until March 30th.

And so once -- once the comment period closes, we will analyze those comments, work with the VA again to draft a final rule, and the aim for all of us is to have the rule be effective October 1 of 2018. That means we would have to publish a -- a final rule by the end of August, because usually there’s a 30-day effective-day lag between the time a rule is finalized and the time it becomes effective.

That would give companies, you know, basically 30 days to kind of review the final rule and come up with, you know, any changes that they think are
necessary and the idea would be from that point forward. October 1, 2018, that would be the rule that we would use and that’s the rule that the VA will use to determine ownership and control.

And then as part of that, in connection with that, the law also directs protests and appeals to go to our office of hearings and appeals at SBA. And protests, by that I mean protests with respect to VA procurements or appeals of a denial from CVE, so that also is a rule that was proposed. We’re working on finalizing that and we’re going to have that be effective also October 1. So all those rules will be effective, including changes that the VA needs to make to their rules with respect to ownership and control.

So I -- I think we’re going to go over the -- the ownership and control specifics tomorrow more, because I’m not sure that’s necessarily of interest to the interagency council, but I will update you, if I can, on a couple, five or so, open FAR5 cases that have to do with small business, some investigative rules that are coming, and then some legislation that recently came out.

So for us there’s one rule over there that has to do with similar or similarly-situated entities and the limitations. Also contracting, which allows firms
to -- to join together and perform the limitation on subcontracting using subcontractors, instead of just having the prime be able to do that.

Under -- this is from the NDAA of 2013. Under current regulations though you can already rely on subcontractors for SBVO set-asides and for homes on set-asides, so this will make 8(a), women-owned small business, very similar to that.

Secondly, there’s a rule over -- open to conform the FAR joint venture rules to SBA’s joint venture rules. We changed our rules in 2016 to allow, for example, the All Small Mentor-Protégé Program which allows you to get a mentor that -- that could be even a large business and you can joint venture and qualify for any government contract that you qualify for as a protégé, so extend -- basically extending the 8(a) Mentor-Protégé program to the entire small business community.

Those rules are effective and you can utilize those now, we -- because we -- we follow those when we make decisions on eligibility, but the FAR needs to conform, so we have a case open to -- just so that the FAR clauses mirror what our rules say.

There’s -- there’s a -- there’s a case open on multiple-award contracting that addresses things like
partial set-asides, reserves, and task order set-asides, this is from the Jobs Act of 2010. SBA did a final rule on 2013 and then the FAR proposed something in 2016, so this is a -- the third kind of open small business rule that we’re working on right now.

Fourth, there is still a case open on how Part 19, which is the small business part, applies to contracts performed outside of the United States. Right now the language kind of is -- it’s confusing to some people the way it’s written, that it kind of says that it doesn’t apply outside the U.S. except for certain parts.

We’ve always maintained that agencies have the discretion to use set-asides outside the United States and, in fact, many agencies like USAID do, but some folks are interpreting that language as saying they’re prohibited from doing set-asides outside the U.S., so we’re trying to get language that we can all agree on to fix that particular confusion.

And then the fifth rule that’s over at -- that’s open right now, a FAR rule, is called lower-tier subcontracting and that -- that applies to large businesses and the idea is that they will -- once this is finalized, they will have a -- a goal at the first tier and a goal at lower tiers for small business
subcontracting.

Currently they get goals at the -- just the first tier, which means the first level down, and they report on that at the first level down. So the idea will be as there are subcontracting plants below that, that there will be reporting and goals as well. Any question on those FAR rules before I move on to some SBA things?

(No response.)

MR. DODDS: Okay. Four SBA rules that you should be aware of and looking for, there’s one over at OMB right now for interagency review that’s a proposed rule, it addresses a lot of things. Two of the things it addresses is there -- there may be a need for some adjustments to the limitations on subcontracting for certain industries where the 50-percent requirement may not work.

Under the NDAA it said that 50 percent of the amount paid on the contract must be retained by the small business on a service contract basically, and certain industries that may not work, and so we may hopefully propose a rule to get comment on whether we need to make some adjustments.

It also addresses the issue of set-asides under set-aside contracts. When SBA finalized a rule
back in 2013, we talked about in the preamble that we
didn’t think you should be able to do a set-aside under
a set-aside. If it was set aside for 8(a), for
example, all 8(a) firms under that should be able to
compete. You should not be able to further set aside
for HUBZone firms that are also on that contract, so
that was something we kind of talked about in the
preamble.

A lot of agencies are doing -- allow set-
asides under current contracts, even, you know, older
set-asides under set-aside contracts, so we’ve agreed
to hopefully propose a rule to get comment on whether
we should allow that. So that’s at OMB, I think, for
interagency review.

There’s two other rules that we’re going to
put into clearance right now, one involves the women-
owned certification program. The NDAA of 2015
basically has told us to set up a certification program
either by SBA using third-party certifiers, state
agencies, or other entities and so we have to -- we did
an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking, but we have
to do a proposed rule now to get public comment on --
on what that’s going to look like.

And then we hope to also propose a rule on the
HUBZone program to make the HUBZone program a little
1 easier to comply with, because it’s the one program
2 that we’ve had the most difficulty meeting our goals
3 and it’s probably the most difficult program that we
4 have to comply with. So we’d like to -- we’d like to
5 propose some ideas around how we define employees and
6 -- and how we determine eligibility, so hopefully that
7 will be published this fiscal year as well.
8
9 All right. So I want to just bring your
10 attention to a couple changes. The NDAA of 2018 I
11 think came out after the last time we met, so just a
12 couple small business provisions in there that you
13 should be aware of. One is the e-commerce portal,
14 which is a -- the idea is that you’ll be able to buy
15 online commercial items under the simplified
16 acquisition threshold and in an easy kind of quick way,
17 the way we buy things at home.
18
19 They did mention small business in it. They
20 did say that if you procure a product through this
21 portal from a small business it will count towards your
22 small business goals and it also says that nothing in
23 this section shall be construed as limiting the
24 authority of a department or agency to restrict
25 competition to small business concerns. OMB and GSA
26 are -- are going to be the ones that are kind of
27 leading this phase-in effort, but, you know, it’s
something to be aware of if you -- if you sell
commercial items to the Government.

You probably already heard this, but the
simplified acquisition threshold was increased by the
NDAA to $250,000, micro purchase was increased to
$10,000. And these terms were also inserted to the
Small Business Reserve section, 15(j), so now anything
below -- at or below $250,000 is a reserve for small
business unless you can’t find two or more that can
perform.

And then a couple other things to point out,
the -- the -- they address -- they tried to address
HUBZone in this legislation as well. One thing to
note, if you are interested in HUBZone, is -- one of
the problems is that we get economic data maybe every
year and so then the HUBZone, your status can change
from year to year. Not just for your business, but for
your employees, because you have to be located in a
HUBZone and 35 percent of your employees have to reside
in a HUBZone, so that -- that kind of constant change
is kind of disrupting.

So this legislation basically freezes the map
until sometime after 2020 and then from then on we’re
only going to be looking at the data every five years,
so the -- the map will be updated every five years
instead of annually.
And then it also gives you that three-year redesignation where even if you’re -- where you are isn’t a HUBZone, you can still be considered a HUBZone for three years after it’s redesignated. So it’s almost like an eight-year stability, so that will help companies hopefully invest and employ people from HUBZones, and it -- it -- they also did allow -- they’d allow state governors to petition SBA to create HUBZones where the economic statistics don’t -- don’t show that they should be a HUBZone.

And then the last thing I’ll point out is in January the -- the Section 809 Panel issued a report, this is a report of government contracting experts advising DOD on its acquisition policies. If you’re interested in that kind of thing, there is a whole section, Section 6 is all about small business.

And their concern, and as you’ll see in -- in the report, is they -- it’s so hard for the DOD to do business with small businesses or small business to do business with DOD that they’re missing out on a lot of great technology and things that they need to make them the best that they can be; so, a lot of this -- a lot of the recommendations are about ways to get to small businesses.
Not just small business that they’re --
they’re historically doing business with for
maintenance, and operations, and things like that, but
for cutting-edge businesses that just don’t take the
time to do business with the Government because of all
the complexities. So there’s a lot of recommendations
about outreach, and communication, and so forth,
enhancements to SBIR, and other kind of technology,
ways that DOD can buy technology from -- from small
businesses.

And then the -- the last kind of interesting
recommendation that they made is that they -- they said
that -- they recommended that if a firm outgrows its
size standard, that it should consider -- still be
considered small for three years after that. So right
now, you know, if you’re awarded a contract and you
outgrow your size standard, you’re kind of -- we still
consider that contract to be small, but for -- for up
to five years, but we don’t allow you to bid further
once you’ve outgrown your size standard. So under this
they would be allowed to bid for up to three years
afterwards and, you know, unless the firm was acquired
by another business.

So these are just recommendations from this
panel. We don’t know whether Congress will implement
any or all of it, but it’s--it is interesting. If you’re interested in doing business with DOD, these are the recommendations of experts on how DOD should buy from small business. And I think--I think that’s all I need to update you on, are there any questions from what I’ve gone over already?

MR. LEGHORN: Yeah, Ken, I have a quick question for you. Going back to where you were talking about with the--the part nine and I believe the overseas contingency funding, do you know if legislative action has been taken on that, like what--where is it, is it a rulemaking thing now or--

MR. DODDS: Okay. It’s--this is a rule to kind of address government-wide.

MR. LEGHORN: --um-hum.

MR. DODDS: But there was legislation recently that basically said for DOD there are certain contracts that are going to be excluded from the goals and certain contracts that the PCRs will not be reviewing, it’s contingency operations, I believe, status of force agreements, Arms-Export Control Act, and I think awarded and performed outside of the U.S.

So there’s still lots of--you know, billions of dollars in contracts that will still be covered, but there--that does exclude billions of contracts--
dollars of contracts for DOD only. The -- the rest of
this FAR case, that will apply to State, and USAID, and
the other agencies that do business outside the U.S.,
so -- and it's -- it's just a FAR rule and it will be
proposed if it goes out for public comment.

MR. LEGHORN: Okay.

MR. DODDS: All right.

MR. LEGHORN: Thanks.

MR. DODDS: Yep.

MS. CARSON: Any other questions for Ken?

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: I had -- Ken, this is
Maggie.

MR. DODDS: Hello.

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: I just wanted to go
back to the e-commerce portal provider, that seems to
be on the fast track and I was just wondering if you or
anyone else from SBA was actively engaged in partnering
with GSA and OMB on that, especially with their
recommendations coming out later this month regarding
which statute they have to comply with and which they
don't?

MR. DODDS: Yes, we -- we definitely are --
been -- have been talking about GSA and OMB, we have
the pleasure of talking to OMB every two weeks. We
have a weekly -- biweekly call to talk about issues
like that, so, yes, we will -- we will be involved in that.

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: Good, because they’re already having industry days, and listening sessions, and it didn’t -- I didn’t see anyone there yet, so glad you’re -- glad you’re onboard.

MR. DODDS: We’re aware of it, yes. Thank you.

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: Good.

MR. BLUM: Hi, this is -- this is Matthew Blum, I’m from OMB OFPP and we have been working with GSA on the implementation plan. And just for context, the -- the statute, NDAA requires that OMB and GSA develop a multi-phased implementation plan recognizing this is complicated, and it’s intended to be transformative, and -- and it will require a lot of -- there’s a lot of stakeholder interest, and there needs to be a lot of stakeholder outreach.

So the first phase of the plan is due to Congress within 90 days of when the law was enacted, which would be next week.

MS. BULLARD-MARSHALL: Um-hum.

MR. BLUM: And -- but that’s -- that’s just phase one. And as -- as -- as you just mentioned a moment ago, the last specifically does anticipate that
there be some discussion of what laws might impose barriers to full implementation of the ability of the Government and for that matter of contractors to be able to engage with the Government through these commercial e-commerce portals in a much more user-friendly, efficient manner, so it is a two-way street. It’s not just what makes it easier for the Government, but also what’s going to make it easier for third-party sellers.

And you may recall that Congress also had a great deal of interest in trying to make sure that -- to the extent this is occurring through commercial platforms, that the agreements that are ultimately entered into by the Government with those platforms don’t have a lot of added government-unique requirements that made doing business with the Government very different than to third parties, including small business, than it would be when they’re just selling in -- in the commercial market.

So there was an outreach session in -- on, I think, January the 9th that had a -- a good robust conversation of business rules, compliance rules, the different ways in which in a commercial market there are different types of platform models.

You know, think, for example, the -- the
marketplace that Amazon, as one example, conducts where you have a platform where they sell some of their own products, but they also allow for third parties to sell through their platform. We had a representative from then Staples as a -- as a different model where they essentially sell their own proprietary products, so they built a platform for their own purposes.

And then thirdly, I think about kind of an e-procurement marketplace where you have sellers of technology that -- that don’t manage platforms, but sell the technology that would allow for the Government to be able to cull aggregate, if you will, information from -- from different platforms, think, like, Kayak and Trivago.

So there’s a lot to think about, because there’s so many models and -- and, you know, technology is clearly disruptive in this space. So with all of that in mind, I think that you will see that the -- that the report that comes out where the first phase of the implementation plan is, I think fair to say, going to be relatively high level and it’s going to anticipate much more market research and outreach with -- with small business and other, you know, interested stakeholders.

So this is just really the beginning of a --
of -- of a -- of a conversation, it’s -- it’s by no means going to be an end result. And -- and we, you know, definitely appreciate the opportunity for small businesses that, you know, are heavy players in the -- in the COTS market and want to make sure that, you know, their interests are, you know, and their equities are understood and that we are taking full advantage of -- of their -- of their services.

And also recognizing, as a last point, that there are a lot of companies, small businesses that have invested in the federal marketplace already and are selling, you know, their products through existing government platforms, so, you know, there needs to be a lot of thought and -- and consideration given as we move forward as to how we make sure that those equities are also being considered.

MS. CARSON: Thank you. That’s really helpful, Matthew. Thank you, Ken.

MR. DODDS: All right.

MS. CARSON: Once again --

MR. DODDS: Thank you.

MS. CARSON: -- for contributing. Is there a question on the phone?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Please identify yourself.
(No response.)

MS. CARSON: No?

MR. ROCKEFELLER: I -- I think -- this is Mark and I think you heard me. I’m trying to figure out how to mute my speaker.

MS. CARSON: Okay. We will allow you to continue, Mark, welcome.

MR. ROCKEFELLER: Thank you.

MS. CARSON: I’m going to introduce my colleague, Derrick Brown, from the All Small Mentor-Protégé program. We have had a couple updates in their first year of operating. I’m looking forward to hearing what you have to tell us today, I’ll turn it over to you.

MR. BROWN: Thank you and good evening. I just have a -- a brief update from the All Small Mentor-Protégé program. My name’s Derrick Brown. If you could turn to slide two. All right. For our updates we have 451 approved mentor protégé agreements in our portfolio, an average of -- of turnaround for certification, an average of 10-days turnaround on review and approval. We have a -- we have had 102 All Small Mentor-Protégé applications declined and typically they are soft declines where they can come back.
We -- to -- to keep the average of 10-day -- an average of 10-day turnaround we have to make a decision after we request the information. The information -- if the information has not come -- has not come in, then we make a decision to decline. And then you can almost be sending a reconsideration that same day if you wanted to, but we have to keep the process going.

Lessons learned from a little over -- well, almost a year and a half of lessons learned we’re continuing to work with federal agencies and departments to increase awareness of our All Small Mentor-Protégé Program and we’re working to enhance the program evaluation and annual evaluation process. We’re in the annual evaluation process now where firms are starting to report back to us the one-year relationships with the mentor protégé agreements.

Opportunities, we’re working to advance and enhance customer service or customer experience in our protégé community of practice. We’re developing additional joint venture resources for firms, we should have a -- a template up real soon and we’re working on facility security clearances for firms, that seems to be an -- an issue for some of our firms.

The next slide. This is just the category
breakdown of the approved firms in our portfolio, which you have 8(a) firms, small businesses, HUBZone firms, veteran-owned businesses, service-disabled -- disabled veteran-owned businesses, woman-owned small businesses, and EDWOSBs.

If you look at the bar graph you’ll see that service-disabled veteran-owned businesses are leading the category and that’s been that way basically since we started the program. So next -- next slide. Well, that’s my update, but the next slide. If you have any questions you can ask me, I’m here, or you can reach out to our mailbox at allsmallmpp@sba.gov. and we usually reply back the same day.

MS. CARSON: I --

MR. BROWN: Any questions?

MS. CARSON: -- sorry, I jumped on it. Yeah, I have a question for you.

MR. BROWN: All right.

MS. CARSON: Do you track the types of support the protégés are seeking from mentors and the second part of that question, in your one-year evaluations what’s the feedback you’re getting from the protégés on the -- that support and whether they’ve received?

MR. BROWN: First question, do we track -- what was the first one, do we track --
MS. CARSON: The types of support that the protégés are seeking from --

MR. BROWN: -- yes.

MS. CARSON: -- the mentors?

MR. BROWN: That’s -- we’re -- we’re now starting to do that. We’ll have more information, I’m going to say, around June, because our annual evaluations will tell us the type of support they’re receiving from the mentors and the kind of support.

I will say that to be -- when firms are going forth, I would say they would need to really get to know the mentor or the person they are going to become involved with in this -- in this particular juncture, because we have some firms where -- you know, and I -- and I had one this morning where a firm wanted to end their relationship and you only have two -- you only can have two mentor/protégé relationships right now for the life of the firm, so I asked them to go back.

MS. CARSON: Um-hum.

MR. BROWN: They were friends, one has a business. Well, the other one has a business, but one business is more mature than his business, and they wanted to go in to help one another, and it doesn’t seem to work. It’s not working well right now, so I asked them to go back.
Since they were friends, they could build some type of relationship on that, talk over coffee, so -- because maybe they -- you know, they’re bumping heads and there could be something that they could discuss and talk about, because I didn’t really want him to end this relationship, because he could probably gain something for it, because it’s for the betterment of his firm.

And he asked me to hold up on the -- the -- well, in cancelling their relationship, and he was going to sit down, and, you know, send an e-mail to break the ice, and then sit down over coffee.

MS. CARSON: Okay.

MR. BROWN: Your next question was?

MS. CARSON: Do the evaluations -- I believe you asked this question of the protégé, how was the quality of support you requested, did you receive it, and then what would SBA do with that?

MR. BROWN: Well, it’s -- right now we -- it’s in the early -- early phase, because we’re -- we’re finding that the people are really loving this program. They really do love this program, they’re finding it out. I’m -- with a couple of firms that sent in their evaluation form, because they have already reached that year where they have to send it in, I’m finding that
they’re saving money. One -- one person had to put in 
a new system for their -- their business.

MS. CARSON: Um-hum.

MR. BROWN: That got done. Another firm had 
to -- what was it? It’s something about personnel, 
human resource. They had to write human resource a 
manual, that was done. It’s -- it’s -- basically I’m 
seeing that a lot of firms are building themselves so 
that they can become profitable and they can sustain 
themselves for over the longevity of -- of whatever 
their business is.

MS. CARSON: Um-hum.

MR. BROWN: But I have one firm that has to go 
back and redo another MPA, because they reached the 
goals that they set forth in that MPA within that one 
year. So in that terms, you have to go back and have 
them set other goals and then we’ll -- we’ll approve 
them for that as well.

MS. CARSON: Thanks for the update.

MR. BROWN: Um-hum.

MS. CARSON: We’ll look for more detail after 
the one-year survey results come out.

MR. BROWN: Yes, ma’am. Thank you.

MS. CARSON: Any questions in the room for 
Derrick?
MR. BLUM: Just say, from OMB’s perspective, I know you guys, Derrick and the team, came over to brief us, and then you also briefed the chief acquisition officer’s counsel. And I do think there is enthusiasm, you know, not only because this program helps small businesses to be -- build capacity in addition to capability, but also, you know, from a regulatory simplification standpoint.

And no criticism to -- to SBA on their joint venture roles, but I think everybody and they would acknowledge that they’re not the easiest to navigate, and this program, it actually provides an avenue --

MS. CARSON: Um-hum.

MR. BLUM: -- you know, for -- for companies to essentially get both the benefits and joint ventures without having to navigate through that -- that process. So I think there’s -- that’s -- that’s an important benefit to -- of this program, so we’ve been tallying and we will continue to do so.

MS. CARSON: Okay. Thank you. Any other questions or comments for Derrick?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Okay. Thank you so much for your presentation.

MR. BROWN: Thank you.
MS. CARSON: We will now jump into our member agency updates and we’ll start with Bill Metheny, Department of Labor, please.

MR. METHENY: Thanks, Barb. I think Barbara Ashe said earlier a great quote, “If they’re not winning, it’s not working,” right?

MS. ASHE: Yes.

MR. METHENY: And so the way I’d like to rip off of that is remind us of veteran unemployment numbers for January, which came out at the end of February, unemployment rates for veterans was 4.0 percent. A year ago it was 4.5. If you compare the -- those veterans at 4.0 to the non-veteran peers, counterparts, 4.3 percent, so veterans are doing well in employment.

The next round of numbers should be out this Friday, so we will release -- the Bureau of Labor Statistics will release the February unemployment numbers, so I’d encourage you to watch for that.

Also in March the 22nd is when the Bureau of Labor Statistics puts out their annual summary of all the data from the previous year, it’s called the 2017 Employment Situation of Veterans report. So 22 March it comes out, and it will be posted, and you’ll be able to see all the data.
If you would like to get a reminder on any of these or when the -- the monthly numbers come out, you’re welcome to subscribe to get those updates and the easiest way is just jump to our website, veterans.gov -- www.veterans.gov and they will give you the option to be able to subscribe. And like a lot of the other federal agencies, you can pick by themes of what you want to receive so you don’t get everything.

MS. CARSON: Um-hum.

MR. METHENY: Unless you want everything. So good numbers on -- on that side for veterans unemployment and we’re excited about that, so they’re winning and it’s working.

MS. ASHE: That’s great.

MR. METHENY: Barb mentioned earlier the HIRE Vets Medallion program, which came out in last years’ NDAA, to recognize employers who hire, train, retain veterans, and it’s an award program to get a medallion. And there are two different levels for three different sizes of business and that will kick off officially this coming January, so 2019, but we’re already in the middle of checking everything out and doing a -- a demonstration project with it and so we are trying out all of our systems to make sure we are ready to go and learn what we can from this model.
And so the idea was to open it up for 300 recipients of the -- of the award this go-around, so the first 300 that can successfully complete their applications will receive the award. It’s not a competition otherwise, it’s just we have to limit it for this year while we’re checking things out.

So to let you know, 600 applications have already been initiated, 208 have already been completed. So 208 out of the 300, so we’re encouraged by the enthusiasm, we’re encouraged by the quality of what’s coming in, and we’re really excited when we get to open up the -- the faucets all the way for this coming year. So that will be something we want to share with you over the course of the year as we learn more about it and get the word out to a variety of industries, regions, sizes, and so on.

Military spouses and women veterans. The Department of Labor has a new director of our Women’s Bureau and she is passionate about women in entrepreneurship and she’s also interested in military spouses, which is a big emphasis for our administration, and so she is doing some great work in helping us to think about how to make those all come together and working with SBA’s OVBD, Barb’s team, to -- to figure out how do we get the right resources to
the right types of either women entrepreneurs or military spouse entrepreneurs.

And so we’re thinking through what -- what are the different types and so Barb talks us through things like what if it’s a new start, what if it wants -- is ready to grow and expand in scale, what if it’s a legacy that’s -- who do we hand off to, and maybe it’s a -- the legacy handoff is to a woman -- woman entrepreneur veteran or spouse, so we’re very excited about that.

And we’re also exploring continued ways to remove barriers to employment through licensing and credentialing problems that military spouses face as they move around with their military member, so more to follow as we learn about that.

And then the last part I would like to highlight for today is, and Barb mentioned too, the transition program for our transitioning service members. There is lots of energy and interest in this. One of the things that we’re trying to do is move the timeline earlier in the process so that people can -- that the transitioning service members can start it earlier to have time to take advantage of some of the opportunities that they learn about in the process. So far there seems to be a lot of enthusiasm about doing
that.

We also are updating some of the elective tracks. In addition to Boots to Business, there is a career technical training track which traditionally has been oriented towards the trades. We’re expanding and refreshing that, so it gets into a whole bunch of other ways to enter the work world and -- and take advantage of training through apprenticeships and other such opportunities.

It’s actually getting refreshed in its naming to something we think is going to be called career aspiration and planning track. So that’s a work in progress, but we think that the timing’s right so that the interagency work group that includes DOD, and VA, and SBA, and Department of Labor, and Education, and OPM. As they’re working through their refreshing the curriculum, and naming, and DOD’s updating some of their instructions, it’s all coming together with great congressional support it seems as well.

So we’re excited about that, because the feedback we’re getting for the curriculum that we are seeing is that veterans are saying it’s helpful, it’s making a difference to have the time to think and get great feedback on how they write the resumes, how they think about themselves, and how they present themselves
And so one quick anecdote, I was approached by an 11 Bravo Paratrooper from Fort Bragg, North Carolina who went through the -- the course a week ago. He called me one night and said, “Hey, can I give you some feedback?” and he was excited about the experience he was having through there. And this was one of the people -- one of the types of military members that we think, oh, they don’t have these skills that are going to be easily transferred to the civilian market and he was so enthusiastic by what he had learned of all that he does bring to the table.

He’s heading off to school to get an economics degree, he’s finally going to get to live with his -- his wife, who is in medical school, and after he’s been on deployments. And the only thing that kept him from taking the courses earlier, and he’s taken -- signed up for several of the electives, to include Boots to Business and others, was the fact that deployments and professional military education sometimes get in the way of transitioning.

And so I wanted to share that with you, because the -- the work that a lot of the interagency partners are doing and have invested are paying off for people like this young NCO, so thank you.
MS. CARSON: That is motivating. Thank you really for sharing all of that. And there’s a lot left for us to do, but it’s good to remember we have come a long way. Thank you. We’ll turn it over to Department of Defense for an update.

MS. DIAZ: Just really brief I just wanted to say that the DOD is going to be hosting a series of workshops for small businesses just to inform small businesses about our small business programs and one of the topics is going to be on cybersecurity.

And so we did have our first workshop at Howard University on the 28th of February, we had about 170 small businesses that attended, we had a six-member panel on cybersecurity. So more to come on that, I just wanted to share that.

And as Natalie mentioned earlier, we will be collaborating to come out with some sort of fact sheet, because it is like drinking from a fire hose when you look at our website to see all the things in -- in terms of personal businesses to comply, so we will collaborate to come up with a one to two-page fact sheet to help out with that.

MS. CARSON: Thank you. Will the workshops be available virtually for call-in?

MS. DIAZ: Are we -- how are we doing that?
AUDIENCE: We’re looking into doing that at the moment.

MS. DIAZ: I -- I would imagine it’s going to be a combination of things, so right now we’ve been just trying to find venues that will make it easy for small businesses to attend. So some things, we’ll look into that.

MS. CARSON: Thank you. I appreciate that. And we have had some success in doing joint workshops or -- or --

MS. DIAZ: Um-hum.

MS. CARSON: -- webinars with other agencies, Census was the most recent. So if there were an opportunity that you were willing to host on with SBA, we would be thrilled to join you in doing that.

MS. DIAZ: Absolutely.

MS. CARSON: Thank you. And there’s a question from a member of our advisory committee, Fran.

MS. PEREZ-WILHITE: Yes, I’m Fran with ACVB. Your workshops, are any of them non-cybersecurity or is that the only topic?

MS. DIAZ: No, that’s not the only topic, but I was just kind of highlighting that, since that was something that was -- that came up.

MS. PEREZ-WILHITE: Um-hum.
MS. DIAZ: But our workshops cover all of our small business programs that we have and any other important information that we want to make sure that we get out to the small business community.

MS. PEREZ-WILHITE: My team, in North Carolina, we could help you out with venues if you want to do some more workshops. It’s all free, and you can just show up, and teach, and we’ll do everything else for you.

MS. DIAZ: Great.

MS. PEREZ-WILHITE: Okay.

MS. DIAZ: Thank you.

MS. PEREZ-WILHITE: Thank you.

MS. CARSON: Thank you, Fran, that’s fantastic. Any other questions for Department of Defense?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Okay. And I will give one shout out to Air Force. Secretary of the Air Force did a great presentation on something called the Air Force WERX, W E R X, and all about getting to the small business, and exactly the issues that were raised. We feel sometimes it can’t be agile enough to get to those small businesses, so I really look forward to see what she’s doing as well. And so any other success stories
or if you want to engage, we’re -- we’re ready, we can
-- we --

MS. DIAZ: All right.
MS. CARSON: -- can do more.
MS. DIAZ: All right.
MS. CARSON: And, Barbara Ashe, please come on up.

MS. ASHE: I just wanted to -- that’s the wrong one. I just wanted to let you know that we did a webinar as part of our support for the Veteran Business Outreach Center, so VBOC, on the NIST 800-171 in the fall, and so there are resources out there on how to become compliant.

And we did that before, obviously, the due date of -- of January 1 and so you do have, via our grant, a resource sitting out there for veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses that want to participate on those procurement opportunities.

And we do anticipate and we did advocate for veterans that are looking beyond -- just beyond DOD, because I did hear a sentiment here that other agencies are looking to NIST’s platform as a best practice. And we do anticipate that that would happen and so we encouraged others that even though DOD may not be a --
a targeted customer for your product or services, that
you get compliance sooner versus later --

MS. DIAZ: Um-hum.

MS. ASHE: -- as even just a differentiator in
the marketplace. So we do have a resource out there,
so -- and happy to share it. If you find it helpful,
it -- it does have, you know, some -- just a checklist
of things and happy to share it.

MS. DIAZ: Right.

MS. ASHE: If -- if you want to just take a
look at it.

MS. DIAZ: Thank you.

MS. ASHE: So I’ll make sure we connect.

Thank you.

MS. CARSON: I never want to be labeled a
bureaucrat, because we are, but this makes me really
happy to see that there -- these meetings that do seem
awfully bureaucratic have reconnections that are
meaningful across the nation once we’ve come together
in the basement of the SBA.

Thanks to nonprofits and grantees, like VIP,
and then federal agencies that really are trying to do
the right thing, and Small Business absolutely
understands why we need to have security in our
information systems. It’s just hard to come together
and find the best solutions and also to get the word out, so I really am grateful for the contributions you’re making. Now we’ll move to the Department of Veteran Affairs.

MS. TORRES: Hi. We have a -- a few things that we were updating. As -- as Ken had mentioned earlier, we do have the updates to our regulation, the verification regulation 38 CFR Part 74, and that covers the ancillary part -- portions of the verification program, everything except ownership and control, and that was published as a proposed rule on January 10th.

And the comment period closes on Monday the -- the 12th of March, so if anybody has any more comments -- we’ve actually only received 14 comments so far on that. So we are also planning to have our final rule published as -- as simultaneously as possible with -- with the SBA rules, so that will also go into effect on October 1st. We’ve been working closely with -- with Ken and his folks, and with Della Ford, and OHO on getting the appeals processes together and -- and how that’s going to work.

We’re going to have to -- we’re finalizing up an interagency agreement on that as well, so that those will go -- it’s -- it’s actually three types of -- of appeals, it’s -- it’s status protests on -- on SBD,
VOSB, and VOSB contracts; it’s appeals to verification decisions; and it’s appeals to cancellation decisions. So those will become effective once the other rules are in effect, so that SBA isn’t -- and -- and OHO isn’t having to look at two different sets of -- of regulations when they’re making their determinations.

Now, as far as what the deputy administrator had just spoken about with the move -- the possible move of -- of CVE to SBA, that is something that -- that is under high-level discussions. It would -- we have formed a working group between SBA and VA and we’ve been holding regular meetings. We’ve been speaking on this weekly and monthly, full committee meetings face-to-face. Our next one is actually this Friday and we have been -- we should have a preliminary report out on that on what it’s going to take to -- to create a -- a government-wide certification program for SBD VOSBs.

Of course there are critical things that -- that have to be figured out, like a funding stream, for example. I don’t think anyone would expect the SBA to take over a program like that without any source of funding.

And then the final thing that we have is we’ve had a couple of FOIA requests for the data that -- that
Tom Leney spoke about at the last meeting where there are a number of firms, better-known firms, as SBD VOSBs, that we had findings of ineligibility and subsequently after that they had been given their findings. And subsequently they had been awarded set-aside contracts, so we’re finalizing the data on that and -- and that will be given out to the -- the requesters of the FOIA. And it’s possible that we may be expecting further inquiries on that and that’s it.

MS. CARSON: Thank you for all those updates, I appreciate that. Any questions for Beth?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Okay. General Services Administration, please.

MS. VAN ABSHER: Thank you. I just wanted to echo what you said, Barbara, just the -- the exciting passion about this, you know, with the small business in -- in particular. Veterans is of great interest to me and I know everyone in this room, so hearing about VBOC and Boots to Business I definitely want to connect with you and Bill, definitely, some great things on the -- on the statistics for employment, very encouraging.

For our part we’ve -- we’ve currently met our small business goals. Having said that, I just want to highlight the service-disabled veteran small business
goals, we’ve more than doubled and we’re not done yet.
It’s -- it’s early days, so we’re -- we’re continuing
to promote that. And now that we’ve met them, we want
to encourage everyone to -- we can support you in your
initiatives as well. So please reach out to us, we’re
-- we’re happy to connect on that.

Some of the things that are coming up for GSA,
Small Business Week, that was mentioned before. We
have a VETS 2 GWAC Delegation of Procurement Authority,
training for agency contracting officials in -- in how
to place orders.

The training’s going to be provided by the
VETS 2 GWAC office, our -- Valerie Waldmeier’s the POC
and I can provide information on that to send out. Lee
Tittle will be providing agency-specific training to
the Department of Energy and -- and I can, again,
provide that contact information.

Some other things going on, we have business
development and industry-training events that are going
to be scheduled in the month of May. I know that
Department of Energy has an expo in Houston, Texas May
22nd and 23rd. And for our part, in Fort Worth we have
-- the first week of May we’re trying to schedule an
industry-specific veterans’ event, so more to come on
that.
And then, of course, the VETS 18 Veteran Business Training Symposium, which is June 10th through the 14th in Williamsburg, Virginia. I know many of you are -- are planning to attend, I will be attending as well. And as soon as the agenda’s available, we would like to promote that as well. And that’s it.

MS. CARSON: Great update and I appreciate hearing what else is happening around the country and with other agencies. We have many channels to get the information out and we want to participate too. So we still -- SBA has a strategic alliance memorandum with the National Veterans Small Business Coalition, which is the host of the VETS 18 in Williamsburg, it is an opportunity primarily for those focused on veteran procurement, veteran, and service-disabled veteran-owned companies.

If your agencies want to participate in that, I encourage it. It’s where the rubber meets the road. You will get some honest feedback about how we’re doing and also it’s a chance to get the word out on what we’re doing as well, so I’m glad to know that GSA will be participating as well. Thank you so much.

And we’ll hear from business owners too about their successes and failures. It’s a really frank conversation, so save some plans. Williamsburg is a
great place to spend a few days, especially with our peers. We would move over to you, Matthew, for Office of Management and Budget.

MR. BLUM: Thank you. I’m actually a William and Mary graduate, thank you for the plug.

MS. CARSON: Williamsburg.

MR. BLUM: Near and dear to my heart. At the -- at our last session I did a presentation on increasing small business participation in common contract solutions. I think as everybody knows, a very significant amount of our annual spend is done through products and services that are essentially common to agencies.

I think it is roughly 60 percent, about 285 billion of spend, which is why there has been so much attention on category management where we organize our spending activities around the nature of the products that we’re buying, get subject matter experts, you know, focused on these areas, and sharing information, and practices, and identifying vehicles that have the capacity to support multi-agency or government-wide activity that are doing the best within their -- their class of -- of -- of -- of peers.

All of that said, we know that for the small business community when you’re -- when you’re having
discussions about buying through larger vehicles it -- it creates concern about how you reconcile that with -- with strong small business participation.

At the last session I -- I outlined a number of steps that we’re taking, both at the government-wide and agency level, to ensure that there is full and active understanding and participation of the OSDBUs and Small Business directors in all of these conversations. It is an ongoing project, but I believe that we are making progress.

We are working towards guidance that will clarify a -- a number of points that I think are very important to this task force to sort of disabled veteran-owned small business, veteran-owned small business committee, and the other small business groups as well.

And just to repeat them briefly, one is that nothing that we are providing in guidance to facilitate greater use of -- of common contract solutions in any way changes an agency’s obligations to meet its small business goals. It’s probably the most important thing, because we know that OSDBU’s small business directors are ultimately evaluated, first and foremost, on how well they are meeting those goals.

Related -- closely related to that is that
while we were very pleased by increasing participation and representation of small businesses on these best-in-class vehicles, the fact that a vehicle is best-in-class doesn’t mean that it’s best-in-class in every instance for every agency. And so what that means is that we need to make sure that there is data provided to our small business directors in OSDBU so that they can do thoughtful analyses to figure out when a migration to a, that makes sense, best-in-class contract and when it doesn’t.

And when it doesn’t, means there’s circumstances where it may be better for the agency in terms of value, in terms of relationships, in terms of the expertise that small businesses offer, in terms of just building the industrial base to that agency, many reasons why there may be benefit to staying with the agency level or even a local solution. So in order to make all of this happen, you need to make sure that there’s a seat at the table for our -- our OSDBUs and small business directors.

Happy to say that through the active discussions with the Small Business Procurement Advisory Council that Robb Wong chairs and through the OSDBU Council that our own Tom Leney chairs we have gotten the word out and all of our category managers
have invited OSDBUs to be active participants as they are doing their strategizing both in formulating and development of vehicles and also reviewing performance on existing vehicles.

There was a -- a couple days ago there was a government-wide category management industry event where small businesses and actually other large business that oftentimes have some of the same questions got to think about what does best-in-class mean to industry, you know, is there a perception or misperception about mandatory usage, what sort of steps can we take in this forthcoming guidance to make sure that some of this misunderstanding is -- is clarified.

We have invited OSDBUs to comment on some of the strategic plans that the category managers have developed for the future. I know SBA and GCBD offered some -- some comments a few days ago and I think the OSDBU counsel has as well.

And we also wanted to make sure -- equally important that this information, which is being captured in a small business dashboard, will be provided to the OSDBUs so that when each agency is working through what its plan looks like for use of best-in-class vehicles or -- or a mix of that and agency and local solutions, that the OSDBUs are at the
table. And to be at the table again, they need to make
sure that they have information to -- to analyze what’s
the impact and what’s better for -- for my agency.

So I know we’ve been a little obnoxious about
it and I think it’s important we continue to push
OSDBUs to -- to push back on us if the information and
these dashboards that we’re creating is not what they
need. We need to know that, so that -- we understand
these are hard decision, but there’s a lot of benefit
that can be gained, you know, through a best-in-class
vehicle and a government-wide solution, but there’s
also a lot that can be gained at the agency on a local
level.

And I think by having these conversations we
can achieve the type of balance that I think everybody
knows, knew all along can be done, but we always --
haven’t always had the bridges or the infrastructure to
make it happen. So I’m -- I’m looking at my other
agency partners that have been great and will continue
to be on this -- on this ongoing journey and we will be
happy to -- we will continue to do reporting, bring
people from the community, from the program management
office to the task force to answer questions.

And I think as part of the rollout of -- of
any guidance that we do, we will make sure we have some
one-pagers and other types of tools that can be easily
digested by small business contractors if they, you
know, understand what obligations we’re putting on
agencies, and what’s just myths, and also to similarly
convey that down as to the lowest levels of the agency,
because oftentimes we have -- we have good
understanding with senior procurement executives and we
mistakenly think that that means that translates into
perfect understanding at the contracting officer level.

And, frankly, if they don’t understand it and
they misapply the policy, then the -- the good results
that we had don’t get achieved. So I think I’ve
covered my other -- my other areas pretty well, so I’ll
leave it at that, but, again, happy to -- any -- any
thoughts that people have as we move forward on this
welcome -- we welcome them.

MS. CARSON: Thank you, Matthew. Any
questions for Matthew?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: We’ve just had a conversation in
SBA today. I swear, we should have bracelets made, but
the -- what would a contracting officer do is how we
were trying to think of things. Really the -- as you
said, the best intentions and policy, if it can’t be
enacted or there are other pressures that prevent it
from being acted upon, we need to consider those other options.

MR. BLUM: Actually, if I could make one more comment just to that point. I think I’ve also mentioned that we have a -- on the Acquisition Gateway, which is what was stood up by GSA to provide access to information, best practices, pricing information/strategies, five different categories, and also just things that are innovative. And I know I’ve mentioned this before, we’re very interested in -- in having stories and practices specifically related to small business participation.

So, for example, I guess within the last year we stood up -- or actually SBA stood up a program, 8(a) Digital Services. It was on a pilot basis, but essentially would allow for agencies to more easily access 8(a) contractors that -- that -- that were smart in -- in -- in agile software development to get to a minimum viable product without having to use that contractor necessarily forever, so that they get experience and the agency doesn’t resist using a program because they’re not sure up front if they’re ready to commit in the long term.

So we’re also encouraging people to put these best practices and success stories onto the -- to the
hub, but to your point, you know, at the end of the
day, we’re also asking ourselves what is it that the
contracting officer needs and will get them to use this
program, what would make the program and the benefits
go viral?

I think oftentimes when we put out best
practices or success stories they make us at the policy
level, especially in headquarters, feel pretty good.

MS. CARSON: Um-hum.

MR. BLUM: But that doesn’t always translate
to what a contracting officer that’s deciding whether
to use the program actually can do so. So another
thing I think GSA is doing, but it’s with -- at least
in partnership with OPM, is something called Open
Opportunities, which is essentially like a Craigslist
for finding capacity within another agency and it’s a
way for you to offer help or to ask for help.

And we -- it’s -- it’s going to be -- if -- if
you will relaunch with a -- a focus on the acquisition
space, I believe by the summertime, and we can provide
more information in an upcoming meeting, but why we
think this is again so critically important, you know,
from a -- when we’ve talked to -- like, we have a
front-line forum of contracting officers.

You know, it’s nice to see the success story,
but what’s really nice is give me the name of a person
that’s -- like a colleague of mine that was just
solving the same problem that I can go call and maybe
they can spend four hours one day sitting with me,
showing how to use a tool of a practice, and that will
apply to any sort of successful practice in a small
business space as well.

MS. CARSON: That’s incredibly valuable, thank
you for sharing that. Did Department of Treasury join
us on the phone?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Okay. Then I will turn it to
American Legion for an update.

MR. LEGHORN: Okay.

MS. CARSON: If you have one.

MR. LEGHORN: Yes. Hi. Thank you for
inviting us to -- to this meeting today and thank you
for letting me back in the building.

MS. CARSON: He was in the private sector
briefly, it makes it sound like you were barred from
the room. So -- so we’re glad that you have come back
to serve in the American Legion, thanks.

MR. LEGHORN: Um-hum.

MS. CARSON: Go ahead.

MR. LEGHORN: So as -- as you folks know, the
Legion hosts pretty much two super bowls for us every year, that’s once -- they’re about six months apart, once for our legislative conference, that just happened last week, and once for our national convention that travels around the -- the country.

We try to front load all of our programs and services and highlight all our partnerships with the agencies during that time to show all our state leaderships that show up what’s possible at the state level, so everything I’m about to update you folks on right now literally happened within the last two weeks.

So we had our first meeting of our newly-established Employment Advisory Committee, VA, SBA, and DOL were present, and we thank you guys for showing up and for your input.

We also had the chance to host the Boots To Business session with the -- the Northern Virginia VBOC and Stan Kurtz, the new VBOC director, also had a chance to come look at what we do and also speak at that event.

We also tried doing something ourselves, which I -- I know the deputy administrator had talked about our advanced course, I’ll go into that right now. When veterans come to a Boots to Business session we realize that a lot of them have been in business for a long
time already, so we wanted to give them an option of
doing something that was a little bit more advanced
than the current Boots to Business curriculum. So we
worked with Foresight CFO, Knights & Holland [sic], and
a few other companies in the private sector, we put
together a program that was focused on scaling and
actually counseling small businesses with local CFOs.

This -- this is our first time doing it, we’re
still -- we’re -- we don’t know if we’re going to stick
to it or not. I am interested in seeing how Emerging
Leaders works at the SBA. I mean, if that’s something
that’s already there, has a great branding, we might
not need to reinvent the wheel, but it’s contingent on
us sitting down and actually looking at that
curriculum.

On some more -- okay. So next I want to talk
a little bit about Kingdomware and the ongoing saga
that’s -- that’s involved. We have joined with NVSBC
and jointly filed an Amicus brief in support of the
current interpretation of Kingdomware as it stands and
it’s in support of PBS’s current case in the federal
circuit court. That literally just happened on Monday,
so more to come on that.

Two weeks ago we also had the chance to
testify in front of a joint session between the House
and Senate Veteran Affairs Committee. Our national commander was able to talk briefly about our -- the small businesses’ issue that we are -- we’re concerned about and one of them is our support for the Fairness for Veterans and Amicus Structure Act.

If you folks don’t know about it, it is -- has to do with the Department of Transportation’s budget and their DBE program, the money goes straight from Congress. Pretty much it’s administered by DOT, but it goes straight to the states. And the states aren’t held to the three-percent goal for small businesses, but they do have a DBE program that carves out 10 percent for small businesses.

But unfortunately veterans and service-disabled veterans are not independently eligible for the DBE program, so that’s something we’re trying to change legislatively and this is something we’ve been pushing for, for six years. Now seven. So that’s -- that’s about it.

MS. CARSON: Thank you, Davy.

MR. LEGHORN: Um-hum.

MS. CARSON: I believe there is a House Veterans Committee meeting or a hearing that’s happening right now today that American Legion is testifying along with the National Veteran Small
Business Coalition and others, so there will be more updates in June for us to follow up on and we look forward to hearing more.

MR. LEGHORN: Okay.

MS. CARSON: Any questions for Davy?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: No. I don’t believe StreetShares Foundation was able to join us on the phone, but just checking.

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Okay. We are about to transition to public comment and I -- I did fail to thank a colleague, and that is a bad thing to do. So Joe Sobota, the partner of the Advocacy, was the one who made it possible for us to get together with Census.

And if you recall, I might have mentioned in December that unfortunately the next survey is -- of business owners is not going to include questions for veteran business owners who are the sole employee, it -- it is only going to survey those who have employees. That is only 15 percent of the population of veteran small business owners, so that’s a problem.

And we have -- we’re trying to turn it into lemonade and potentially seek greater access to administrative data, so that we could still know about
our population and possibly have more timely
information than waiting to get the census data, which
usually take two years to process and get to us. We
don’t really make forward-looking policy decisions
based on that fully.

So I thank you, Joe, and I’m sorry I forgot to
say that earlier, but we can do those interagency
webinars and such. And we found that one extremely
helpful, that gave people and agencies an opportunity
to get public comment on the record before it was
closed, because, unless they’re more like me in reading
the Federal Register every day, that is not the way
we’re going to get the word out to people. There are
very few consumers of the Federal Register. Okay. So
on that note I’m going to --

MS. ASHE: Can we help you with that survey?
MS. CARSON: -- we --
MS. ASHE: I mean, is that something --
MS. CARSON: -- we will -- I’ll follow up with
you --
MS. ASHE: -- yes.
MS. CARSON: -- Ms. Barbara Ashe, but I’m --
I’m actually going to call you up here for a moment --
MS. ASHE: Oh.
MS. CARSON: -- for our first public comment
1 session. Our office does give a grant to the Veteran
2 Institute for Procurement, it’s -- I believe we’re on
3 our fourth year now, and we started with the program
4 they were already doing, which is for those who are
5 already active in federal procurement, they have
6 employees, they’re generating revenue, past performance
7 is looking good.
8
9 Barbara was very kind to address with me the
10 gap, which was those who are just maybe getting into
11 subcontracting and have never been a prime and -- and
12 incredible results in that.
13
14 Then we asked for one more thing, and I think
15 I’m done asking, but the -- this was a focus on
16 international trade, especially exporting, and not just
17 OCONUS federal procurement, but commercial
18 international opportunities where we thought that
19 veterans may be better situated than some having lived
20 overseas. Not that that makes you an expert in doing
21 business overseas, but you’ve got some cultural
22 competency potentially and you have opportunities.
23
24 So I’m going to turn it over to you, Barbara,
25 to tell us a little bit about VIP International and the
26 reason that Commerce is on the phone is that there is a
27 program called Vets Go Global and we wanted you to hear
28 about those intersections and where you may have some
opportunities for agencies where you’ve got small
businesses that you would want to refer to this
program. So I turn it over to you for a quick intro on
VIP --

MS. ASHE: Sure.

MS. CARSON: -- International.

MS. ASHE: Absolutely. So, sorry. So VIP
International follows the other two programs --

MS. CARSON: Um-hum.

MS. ASHE: -- which are VIP Start and VIP
Grow. So it is a three-day, 27-hour program for
veterans who want to scale globally. So they already
have to have some competency in the federal market,
because we do focus two full days on OCONUS and we
focus on what is now different.

So you might have been supporting State, or
AID, or -- or the Department of Defense, Army, you
know, with CONUS work, and now you have an opportunity
to expand, and we need to make sure we share with them
what risks just went up.

MS. CARSON: Okay.

MS. ASHE: And what they need to know and be
aware of in order to perform and comply. And so that
program focuses, the first of the three -- there’s
three days, the first day and a half, about half of it
is on that OCONUS. Again, what are the -- what is the regulatory environment, the compliance, how do you source locally, oftentimes that is required, and what are your risk factors.

And then -- and this is where Vets Go Global comes in, because we know as soon as you get over there you’ll start building relationships, which is a good thing, and you might be asked or you’ll see opportunities to now do other work in country, and now you’re not doing business with DOD, and with the FAR, and, you know, U.S. currency, and so on, and so on.

And so, again, what just changed in your life? Again, what risks, what do you need to be aware of, what -- you know, what do you have to have in place in order to do business now you’re not doing business with the United States Government?

So that is the second part of VIP International and it’s to not only give them the awareness and the knowledge, but also to, you know, encourage them. You know, if you know, then you may, you know, take advantage again of those opportunities globally.

And this was in coordination, again is when SBA started the Scorecard, started to include two years ago OCONUS work as part of the denominator in terms of
meeting the small business goals. So it was -- you know, we wanted to react to the -- what we knew would be new opportunities and -- you know, and concurred with Barbara that it would be -- that we thought veterans would be uniquely positioned to -- to capture those opportunities if they had the information.

And so we are excited that we were able to, on the second part of that again where the commercial expansion or commercial introduction to work with the Department of Commerce, which has an -- excellent, you know, resources that they should tap into. All businesses should tap into, quite frankly, and -- but Vets Go Global focuses in on helping veterans to understand its scale and enter global markets.

And so we work with Murat Muftari with the Department of Commerce who has stood up a wonderful program. And I’ll let Murat, who is, I think, on the line, you know, take it from there, but it’s been a great partnership.

MS. CARSON: Thank you. Department --

MR. MUFTARI: Yes.

MS. CARSON: -- of Commerce, if you’d like to give a brief summary of Vets Go Global you’re welcome to?

MR. MUFTARI: Sure. Thanks, everyone.
Thanks, Barb. Yes, so just to piggyback off of what Barb was saying and so everyone kind of is aware, we work for the Department of Commerce and the agency, the International Trade Administration.

We are the trade promotion arm of the Federal Government and we have a network of global trade professionals both domestically in over 100 cities and internationally in 125 countries embedded as commercial diplomats and -- and they hire local national industry experts that are really the boots on the ground given any -- you know, any industry in any -- any country.

The Vets Go Global initiative was started a few years ago. It -- really, it just was -- we founded it to capitalize on our network of domestic international trade specialists, like myself, to more proactively engage and serve the veteran business community as a thought leader and collaborative partner in international business development and export of, you know, global market expansion and we do that through various export assistance and education by more proactively engaging the -- the veteran business community.

It’s allowed us to create industry-specific type events like Trade Missions. We recently, in October, took eight companies, of which six were
veteran owned, over to Mexico for a sustainable infrastructure and construction trade mission, so that allowed them to meet government officials and -- and foreign, you know, Mexican procurement officials with various infrastructure projects, and also meet private sector potential partners that wanted to represent their products or services, and also it -- it was a -- it was tied into one of the biggest construction trade shows in Latin America.

And so, you know, by engaging the veteran business community, you know, we’ve looked at other industries, like the healthcare industry is a strong one. A lot of veteran businesses are medical supply type companies and also health IT companies, so we’re looking to -- maybe to do a trade mission on that, that industry focus.

Also safety and security. Obviously in the Middle East and other parts of -- you know, of South America there’s -- there’s some good markets out there where veterans provide in, so we’re looking to develop some trade missions to those areas, but ultimately our -- our goal is to -- to really just work with various multipliers, like VIP International, like the VBOCs, and like other partners like that, you know, Bunker Labs being another one, and see which companies might
be export ready and having shown some success domestically.

You know, if -- if they do have that domestic success, if they do show that they’re good at, you know, Federal Government contracts particularly, if they’re OCONUS, you know, typically they’re in -- in the right position to succeed internationally.

Only 10 percent of veteran-owned businesses do international and, you know, if we could just increase that number a couple percentage points upward, you know, you’d see a dramatic increase in job opportunities for veterans.

So that’s currently where we stand. You know, I’m excited to hear about the VBOCs and -- and -- and re-engaging on that effort, you know, at the local and regional level. We -- we love to partner up and do seminars. So we also host quarterly webinars. We have an upcoming webinar with Ex-Im Bank talking about export opportunities.

And lastly, when -- when we are talking about government procurement opportunities, we do have an office, an advocacy office within Commerce, and it’s an interagency effort that includes Commerce, State Department, DOD, and others that works -- the one by Commerce really works to -- to -- whether a -- whether
a company is performing -- pursuing a foreign military
sale, an FMS, or whether it’s a direct commercial sale
with a foreign ally, we -- we perform efficacy efforts
to -- to make sure that the U.S. industry is well
represented in a -- in a fair way.
And then if there is only one U.S. company
pursuing that tender opportunity internationally, that
-- you know, that they’re put front and center and
really promoted, you know, in a -- you know, in a way
that will allow them to actually not only pursue that
opportunity, but win that contract, and we’ve seen a
lot of success stories over the years. So, you know,
with veterans and their business focus, a lot of them
focus on defense -- aerospace and defense. It’s a
great opportunity to leverage that, that service and
support, to win some of those contracts.
MS. CARSON: Thank you, Murat, for the update
and I hope there are some connections that come to
mind. Barbara, any closing comments?
MS. ASHE: Yeah. Yeah, I -- Murat, it was --
it was interesting to -- to hear that only 10 percent
of veterans, you know, are doing international work. I
wanted to share with you that 37 percent of our 1,000
graduates do, so we need to focus on those 370, but --
so I -- it’s good to know that they out perform, I’m
not surprised.

MS. CARSON: Yeah.

MS. ASHE: But --

MS. CARSON: Right.

MS. ASHE: But it’s -- it’s an opportunity there and so we -- we should focus on those, so thank you.

MS. CARSON: Thank you so much.

MS. ASHE: Yeah.

MR. MUFTARI: All right.

MS. CARSON: Are there any other comments or questions in the room or on the phone?

(No response.)

MS. CARSON: Okay. I will remind you that we -- our Advisory Committee on Veteran Business Affairs is meeting tomorrow. I’m very grateful there are three members of that committee here who are representing non-profits or small business owners themselves, and dedicate a lot of time and talent to participating in the meetings, and come to hear you the day prior to bring that forward and across the country, so this meeting is important to many of us. And so I thank you, the members here today, and also our advisory committee tomorrow.

Our next meeting will be in the beginning of
June. I believe it’s the first Wednesday in June, I will get back to you. As the deputy administrator said, that homework we have to do is getting input for the fiscal ‘17 report and what I wanted to do is make it easy for you.

Amy Garcia is in the back of the room and is an amazing writer, so what she needs though is just the hint of content. So a reminder on what would be helpful is looking at the recommendations that we agreed would be the body of work that this interagency task force would work to achieve, you know, the goals we set, so go back and look at that.

And actually we’ll send it out one more time, those recommendations, and many of them are hopefully labeled with the agencies that may have some responsibility or equities in that. And all I’m looking for is a few sentences on what, if anything, on those that you have some accountability for, did you do something in 2017 that you would like to share in an annual report.

And it can be brief, but that’s really what we’re trying to do so that we can have a shell of it back to you in the next few weeks, if at all possible. Don’t worry, there’s plenty of coordination ahead so that there will be chances to refine and your
1 leadership will have a chance to comment before it goes
2 external. Any questions at all?
3
4 MR. BLUM: Barb, just a quick question. I
5 think Amy shared both the draft of the report, and then
6 a summary matrix, and the last column has, like, I
7 think, percentages of -- is that just for the members,
8 users, is that something that would actually in your
9 thinking you would like to propose be incorporated into
10 the report?
11
12 MS. GARCIA: Hi, Matthew, it’s Amy. Thanks
13 for the question. I don’t know, what are your thoughts
14 on that?
15
16 MR. BLUM: (No response.)
17
18 MS. GARCIA: I think it just -- we had set out
19 some goals when we set those recommendations as to what
20 a reasonable timeline would be to accomplish those
21 goals. So the matrix that you’re referring to, I would
22 say, has more of an internal kind of barometer reading
23 on where we are on that, I don’t know if we necessarily
24 need to present that in the final report.
25
26 MR. BLUM: It didn’t have any -- I mean, I
27 think it’s sometimes helpful for the members, like when
28 you -- you color code and just -- because it helps us
29 get focused, and prioritize, and, you know, revisit,
30 and figure out what’s important, but --
MS. CARSON: We’ll share that then, some feedback, perhaps a little more clearly on that point.

MR. BLUM: -- um-hum.

MS. CARSON: And we’d also be -- we would welcome -- you know, we try to make these goals smart, the -- to make sure it’s measurable, we could attain it with this group --

MR. BLUM: Okay.

MS. CARSON: -- in a timeline.

MR. BLUM: All right.

MS. CARSON: But if --

MR. BLUM: Yeah.

MS. CARSON: -- we’re missing the mark and do -- we just don’t think the conditions have changed, that’s a welcome --

MR. BLUM: Okay.

MS. CARSON: -- feedback as well.

MR. BLUM: No, I do think -- right, you -- and maybe the color code may not be great, because that kind of suggests, you know, that, you know, yellow may sound like we’re behind or something’s going wrong.

MS. CARSON: Um-hum.

MR. BLUM: But I do -- I do agree with you that one lesson learned from the first set of recommendations was -- I think some of the criticism we
got was that it didn’t -- you know, we didn’t come to
-- some of them we were kind of done with, but didn’t
really, you know, kind of bring them to closure
formally.

And so, you know, sometimes having smaller --
like -- like you just said, smaller bite-size
objectives and then being clearer in our reports where
we think we are on it, you know, without necessarily a
value judgment, you know, may be helpful, because,
like, on a couple of them and you have marked, like,
100 percent in terms of the status.

So one of them says, “Ongoing,” but, I mean,
if it’s something that’s done and then we want to shift
our priority to something else, because we’re not just
here to kind of maintain the status quo, that would be
-- I think that would be helpful for the -- for the
readers to -- to understand.

MS. CARSON: That’s great. And for those that
are ongoing, I think that we would just need to
demonstrate that we addressed it by creating something
that is -- it will be sustained.

MR. BLUM: Yes.

MS. CARSON: And so therefore dropping off is
a recommendation, because --

MR. BLUM: Yes.
MS. CARSON: -- the mechanisms are in place.
MR. BLUM: Yes.
MS. CARSON: We will look for places that we can incorporate that.
MR. BLUM: Okay.
MS. CARSON: Good.
MR. BLUM: Thank you.
MS. GARCIA: And thanks for the question.
MR. BLUM: Okay.
MS. CARSON: Any other questions before we close or comments?
(No response.)
MS. CARSON: Okay. Thank you again for your participation.
(Whereupon, at 3:21 p.m., the meeting was adjourned.)
CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

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s/Jennifer Metcalf Razzino

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