



U.S. Small Business  
Administration

## Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development

September 13, 2023 - Meeting Minutes

### Members Present:

- Dilawar Syed, Deputy Administrator, Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Tim Green, Acting Associate Administrator, Office of Veteran Business Development (OVBD), Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Mathew Blum, Associate Administrator, Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP), Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
- Cordell Smith, Deputy Director, Acquisition & Policy, Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- David Busigo, Senior Advisor, U.S. Department of Defense, Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP)
- Paul Martin, Director of the IT Services Contract Operations Division, GSA
- Fran Perez-Wilhite, Program Manager, North Carolina Military Business Center (NCMBC)
- Michael Phipps, Director, Small Business Task Force, American Legion
- Victor Klingelhofer, Executive Committee Member, Veterans Entrepreneurship Task Force (VET-Force)

1. The quarterly public meeting of the IATF was called to order at 1:00 PM on 09/13/2023 by Timothy Green, Acting Associate Administrator, OVBD, Designated Federal Official.

### 2. Meeting Highlights:

- Welcoming Members and Introduction of SBA Deputy Administrator Syed– Timothy Green.
- Opening Remarks –Deputy Administrator Syed– Opened the meeting by thanking committee members for their support and said he looks forward to working with them on timely issues. He will continue to support the Committee members and SBA’s veteran entrepreneur programs. He emphasized the importance of the veterans community and plans to attend future veterans advisory committee meetings.

a. **Presentation 1 -OVBD Report: Tim Green, Acting Associate Administrator, Office of Veterans Business Development (OVBD)** - Highlighted upcoming Engagements/Events, Expansion of

Veteran Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs), Military Spouse Pathway to Business Program, Veterans Small Business Certification, and National Small Business Week.

- i. **May 1, 2023 – Expansions of Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOC)**– SBA opened six new VBOCs across the United States. Grand opening ceremonies were held at The Citadel in Charleston, SC; Omaha, NE; Colorado Spring, CO; and recently in Alaska. Opening ceremonies will also be held for the California and Nevada VBOC Centers in November.
- ii. **July 17, 2023 - Military Spouse Pathway to Business** – OVBD introduced a curriculum for military spouses called the Military Spouse Pathway to Business Program. This program provides military spouses and caregivers with entrepreneurship assistance and resources to help them start a small business.
- iii. **September 25, 2023** – OVBD held the Military Spouse Pathway to Business Class at the American Geophysical Union Building, 2000 Florida Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009. For more information, please visit [www.bit.ly/SBAMilSpouseCourse](http://www.bit.ly/SBAMilSpouseCourse). OVBD recorded the full Military Spouse Pathway to Business Class for spouses that are overseas and those who could not attend in person or virtually. For more information about online classes, visit [www.sba.gov/milspouse](http://www.sba.gov/milspouse).
- iv. **Veteran Small Business Certification Program (VetCert) – The VetCert Program** officially transferred from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to the SBA. The program opened to the public on January 9, 2023. The SBA has had over 7,000 applications successfully processed through this program and has received 98 percent positive feedback on the program. To access the application portal, please visit [Veteran Small Business Certification \(sba.gov\)](http://Veteran Small Business Certification (sba.gov)). Email: [vetcert@sba.gov](mailto:vetcert@sba.gov); Toll-Free Call Center: 800-862-8088 – Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.
- v. **National Veterans Small Business Week (NVSBW)** – SBA’s 10th Annual National Veterans Small Business Week will be held from Oct. 30- Nov. 3. NVSBW normally has over 200 different events across the country hosted by SBA district offices and resource partners. The purpose of NVSBW is to connect and empower service members, veteran, and military spouse small business owners in their local communities and emphasize SBA’s resources tailored to veteran businesses to launch, grow, expand, or recover. SBA Administrator Isabella Guzman would like to see federal agency partners host an event. If interested, please contact [timothy.green@sba.gov](mailto:timothy.green@sba.gov) or [stanley.kurtz@sba.gov](mailto:stanley.kurtz@sba.gov). To participate in a schedule event, go to [www.sba.gov/nvsbw](http://www.sba.gov/nvsbw).

**b. Presentation 2 – Sam Le, Director of Policy, Planning, and Liaison, Office of Government Contracting and Business Development (GCBD) -**

- i. **8(a) Business Development Program**– The 8(a) program continues to be open for business and is available to agencies to award 8(a) contracts. Mr. Le stated that GCBD is tracking particularly well on Small Disadvantaged Business spending toward the 12

percent goal that the President has set for FY 2023 and agencies are continuing to use the 8(a) program for their awards.

- ii. **Rebuttal Presumption** - The District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee, issued a decision on July 19th, suspending the use of the rebuttable presumption in the 8(a) Program. Rebuttable presumption is the presumption that an individual that is on a list of specified races ethnicities, has social disadvantage for the program. When the SBA suspended the use or rebuttal presumption, based on the court order, 2 things happened: First, SBA suspended any processing of applications and the receipt of new applications and continue to have a suspension on new applications coming into the program. Second, an award to an individual owned 8(a) business, must go through a clearance process and review process to ensure that the individual that owns that business qualifies as socially disadvantaged. For example, if someone became part of the program based on being one of the specified races or ethnicities, when that company is in line for a contract, SBA must go back and review the disadvantage of that individual. There are about 3,000 companies who are in this situation and the SBA has put out guidance for them.
- iii. **SBA Scorecard Rating** – In 2022, the government received an A from SBA for performance in contracting with small businesses. The FY 2023 scorecard will probably be issued sometime in the summer of t 2024. For more information, go to [www.sba.gov/scorecard](http://www.sba.gov/scorecard). There's a 23 percent contracting goal for the federal government set by Congress in working with small businesses, and the government was able to achieve a 26.5 percent contracting rate toward that goal. On service-disabled veteran owned contracting, Congress sets a 3 percent contracting rate. There is a proposal to raise the contracting rate to 5 percent. The government surpassed that the 3 percent goal, contracting at a rate of 4.57 percent with service-disabled veteran owned businesses. The government missed the goal on Women Owned as well as on HUBZone. There is a higher goal for small-disadvantaged businesses of 12 percent for FY 2023. For the previous year 2022, the goal was set at 11 percent by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the President and the White House. The government reached that 11 percent goal. Mr. Le noted that that after COVID-19 the SBA received an A-Plus, and SBA achieved, even with a 65 percent goal, a 75 percent contracting rate with small businesses, on service-disabled veteran, achieved a 35.4 percent contracting rate with service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses.

### 3. Member Reports:

- a. **Dave Busigo, Senior Advisor, Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP), Department of Defense (DoD) -**
  - i. **The Small Business Strategy** – The Secretary of Defense signed off on OSBP's Small Business Strategy. Mr. Busigo stated in FY 2021 small businesses made up about 73 percent of all companies that did business with the DoD, and 77 percent of the R&D companies that did business with the DoD. However, the DoD still had a 40 percent

reduction in the past decade of the participation of small businesses in the defense industrial base.

- ii. **APEX Accelerators** - DoD OSBP recently inherited the PTACs Program, which was part of the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). The Office of Small Business Programs rebranded it and the program is now called APEX Accelerators. The program is used as an entryway for small businesses. Mr. Busigo stated that they are changing the way they do business, including centralizing contracts and coordinating on a variety of areas, and training program providers so they can move on to assist small businesses.
  - iii. **The Mentor-Protégé Program**—This program has been run by DoD for around 35 years but was made permanent this year. This move was made to address the overall concerns small business were having regarding how to work with the DoD.
  - iv. **The Rapid Innovation Fund Program** – The Rapid Innovation Fund Program was implemented in hopes of getting the DoD to restore the funding that the Office of Small Business Programs back to pre-2019 levels. Mr. Busigo said that they are looking to see if his office can cross some of the threshold problems that many of the small businesses had after they received funding.
  - v. **Project Spectrum** – Was established to assist small businesses in the Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) process with the hopes of helping them prevent incursions that DoD has had in protecting their IP and other sensitive information.
- b. **Cordell Smith, Deputy Director of Acquisition Policy, Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU), Department of Veterans Affairs -**
- i. **National Veteran Small Business Engagement of 2023** - Registration for the National Veteran Small Business Engagement of 2023, which takes place from November 7th through the 9th in Orlando, FL, has gone live.
  - ii. **VA's Forecast of Contracting Opportunities** – The VA has received complaints over the years that VA contract opportunities show up on their forecast late, and are not useful to small businesses that try to develop partnerships to compete for the contracts, align themselves with whatever skill sets they might need, or market themselves effectively. The VA is looking to advance the time frame for which things get into the forecast. VA has signed out an enterprise-wide directive that establishes three different categories of information that are expected to be included in the forecast of upcoming opportunities to help the different offices identify what the VA is looking to procure and what information is supposed to be put into the forecast.
- c. **Paul Martin, Director of the IT Services Contract Operations Division, GSA -**
- i. **VETS 2 IT GWAC** – GSA exercised the VETS 2 IT GWAC 5-year option in early February 2023. The contract extends through February 2028. Mr. Martin said that as of today, there have been 204 task orders issued, with total obligations of 1.4 billion dollars. The top agencies are the Department of Army, Air Force, and the Department of Homeland Security. Mr. Martin also stated that other major procurements supporting veteran small

businesses are Polaris GWAC. The government intends to make 70 awards in the pool. GSA is making amendments to the solicitation that will be out in 4-6 weeks for Polaris RFP. In addition, the Oasis Plus RFP will have a pool for service-disabled veteran owned small businesses. GSA is not limiting the number of contracts for the solicitation. The proposal due date is September 22, 2023.

d. **Mathew Blum, Associate Administrator, Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP), Office of Management and Budget (OMB) -**

- i. **Forecasting** –Mr. Blum stated that, OMB strongly agrees that strengthening the quality, timeliness, and access to forecast can be a game changer in improving the ability of service-disabled veteran owned small businesses, veteran owned small businesses and all businesses in underserved communities. This allows small businesses to get more effective access to meaningful contract opportunities’ is proceeding with an initiative that is designed to take the thinking that the VA and other agencies’ thought leaders in this space and make sure that OMB is lifting our game across the federal enterprise.
- ii. **Negotiation and Management of Subcontracting Commitments** – SBA’s analysis of subcontracting plans shows a significant portion don’t have any goals for socioeconomic categories and that subcontracting is one of the most impactful gateways into the federal marketplace. OMB needs to make sure that those plans and commitments are facilitating diversity and resilience and are managed effectively through the contract life cycle. OMB will be working with the SBA and their agencies on how they can leverage some of these practices further to strengthen our subcontracting policies and practices.

e. **Fran Perez-Wilhite, Program Manager, North Carolina Military Business Center (NCMBC)**

- i. **The Small Business Updates: New Regulations and Impacts to Small Businesses** - Ms. Perez-Wilhite thanked Mr. Kevin Doss for conducting a free webinar for the NCMBC regarding the latest updates and future changes to the SDVOSB, 8 8(a), and HUBZone programs.
- ii. **December 7, 2023 - Military Innovation Operational Forum** – NCMBC will host the Military Innovation Operational Forum. This forum is a collaboration between Womack Army Medical Center, Fort Liberty, North Carolina, the North Carolina Military Business Center, the North Carolina Defense Transition Office, and Fayetteville Technical Community College. The purpose is to forge collaborations between Womack and academia, industry, and military partners to yield actionable results, including joint submissions for federal grant funding. For more information, please call (704) 806-6858 or visit the website at [www.NCMBC.us](http://www.NCMBC.us).

f. **Mike Phipps, Director, Small Business Task Force, The American Legion –**

- i. **August 30, 2023** - The American Legion held its 104th National Convention Veteran Small Business Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina. SBA, SCORE Business Mentoring VBOCs participated in this event.

- ii. **Outreach Objectives** – The American Legion continues to advocate for OVBD and to expand its initiative in VBOCs, veteran entrepreneurs, with a focus on Reserves and the National Guard. American Legion supports the increase in funding for Boots to Business and Boots to Business Reboot. The Legion supports the undertaking, participation, and building of veteran small business community. The Legion also encourages private volunteers to support new veteran entrepreneurs to ensure the successful transition of thousands of veterans through self-employment. The Legion would like to see the expansion of the post-9/11 GI bill for entrepreneurship. This provides additional financial resources for veterans that are building their business. The Legion continues to advocate for the creation of public/private partnerships between the SBA and the banking institutions to promote economic growth and opportunity for rural and disadvantaged communities across the U.S.
  - iii. **Federal Contracting** – The American Legion is supporting legislation and regulatory changes to provide reasonable federal procurement set-asides and contracts for businesses owned and operated by veterans. The American Legion believes that the 3 percent contraction rate goal for SDVOBs should be increased to 5 percent. Mr. Phipps stated that the Legion would like to support legislative changes that extend and create a contracting program like VA’s VET-First. He advocates for the placement of staff with federal contracting expertise at the veteran federal contracting ombudsman within the SBA OVBD to assist veterans with procurement issues and other government agencies and to support legislative proposals. This will ensure parity for veterans at the state and federal level for small business contracting programs.
- g. **Victor Klingelhofer, Executive Committee Member, Veterans Entrepreneurship Task Force (VET-Force)**
- i. **The Work Share Programs** – Mr. Klingelhofer states that VET-Force is continuing to see problems in the work share programs and contracts where subcontractors are frequently cut loose or terminated. VET-Force is looking to find ways to resolve the issue.
  - ii. **Direct Aid** – VET-Force wants to see what additional aid SBA could provide by reallocating some funding because of the recent legal decision on the 8(a) program.
- h. **Scott Jensen, Executive Director, National Veterans Small Business Coalition (NVSBC) –**
- i. **November 14, 2023** – NVSBC will be hosting their Annual Awards Gala in Washington, D.C. Mr. Jensen said that this event recognizes federal agencies who met their 3 percent or higher goals for SDVOSB achievement. Also, NVSBC will be recognizing the prime contractors who have met or exceeded their goals. Nominations are open right now and will close soon. For questions, contact Mr. Jensen or go to [www.NVSBC.org](http://www.NVSBC.org).
  - ii. **Engagement, Counseling, and Mentoring Programs** – The NVSBC was able to continue to expand their Engagement, Counseling, and Mentoring Programs initiated as part of their relationship with Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) and the SBA-funded Community Navigator program. The NVSBC has expanded local programming in Tampa,

FL, Norfolk, VA, Huntsville, AL, and San Diego, CA, and looking to expand four more government contracting hubs going into next year.

iii. **May 20-23, 2024** – The VETS 24 Conference will take place on May 20-23, 2024, in Orlando, FL. For more information, please visit [www.NVSBC.org](http://www.NVSBC.org).

4. The next meeting will be held on December 6, 2023, at the American Legion, 1600 K. Street NW, Washington, D.C. at 1:00 PM ET.
5. The meeting was adjourned by Stan Kurtz.