

Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development

Wednesday, December 2, 2020 | 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. ET

Virtual Meeting Minutes

PARTICIPANTS:

Ms. Mary Ellen Mitchell-Whisnant, Department of Treasury
Mr. Shannon Jackson, Department of Defense
Mr. Mathew Blum, Office of Management and Budget
Ms. Suzana Iveljic, Department of Veterans Affairs
Ms. Fran Perez-Wilhite, North Carolina Military Business Center
Mr. Michael (Mike) Phipps, American Legion
Mr. Timothy Green, OVBD Deputy Associate Administrator
Ms. Amy Garcia, OVBD
Ms. Jennifer Razzino, For the Record (meeting recorder)

The virtual meeting of the Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development (IATF) took place on December 2, 2020.

Call to Order – Mr. Timothy Green, IATF Designated Federal Officer (DFO), called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. ET.

Opening and Welcoming Remarks – Mr. Green welcomed the committee.

Introduction/Meeting Logistics – Mr. Stan Kurtz took roll call. He then invited committee members to provide their departmental quarterly updates.

Mary Ellen Mitchell-Whisnant, Department of Treasury’s Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization: Ms. Mitchell-Whisnant stated for FY20, Treasury allocated over \$460 million in funding for small business contracts to veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses. Treasury’s funding for veteran-owned small business contracts made up 4 percent of the total dollars, which exceeded Treasury’s goal, and funding for service-disabled veteran-owned small business contracts represented 3 percent.

Timothy Green, Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Veterans Business Development (OVBD): Mr. Green thanked the committee for attending the meeting and reported that there were 46 people on the call, which was good. He stated that Mr. Larry Stubblefield could not be on the call. Mr. Green briefed members on SBA and OVBD accomplishments during FY20 and the first quarter of FY21. He acknowledged although it was a tough year, OVBD started the new fiscal year strong with a big event called National Veterans Small Business Week, and that took place the first week of November. SBA hosted 211 events, with over 12,000 participants with millions of social media imprints. During that week, VBOCs, SBA district offices, and SBA regional offices provided entrepreneurial training programs. He also stated that OVBD partnered with the Institute for Veterans and Military Families to do a webinar, partnered with LiftFund to do a financial strategies webinar, and partnered with the National Center for Veteran Institute for Procurement for a webinar on contracting.

He also cited that VBOCs served over 46,000 clients. And then specifically to COVID and veteran-owned small business recovery, VBOCs conducted about 4,500 counseling sessions and over 150 training events directly to these small businesses to help them recover during these trying times.

He stated the Boots to Business entrepreneurial training program had been averaging just under 18,000 participants annually. This year, the Boots to Business program had almost 22,000 participants. The huge increase was due to conducting the classes virtually. He also attributed the increase to the Department of Defense, National Defense Authorization Act of 2019, which implemented an entrepreneurial track to one of the four TAP tracks.

Additionally, Mr. Green provided an update on the CARES Act. He said SBA gave out about three-quarters of a trillion dollars. For the Paycheck Protection Program, SBA had over 5 million loans, totaling about \$525 billion. The Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program (EIDL) had about 3.6 million loans so far at about \$190 billion. He stated that SBA has processed more loans, like three or four times more loans, than had ever been done in the history of SBA in one year alone. He also pointed out that SBA loaned about \$835 million specifically to veterans over the past year.

Suzana Iveljic, Director of Shared Services for the Department of Veterans Affairs: Ms. Iveljic acknowledged her colleagues Kimberly McLeod and Elizabeth Torres that were on the call. She stated that VA OSDBU finished strongly in FY20 and made sure that VA's goals maximized utilization for small businesses. She stated VA's focal point was veterans, veteran-owned small businesses, and other partners. She noted that the VA earned an A rating on the FY19 Small Business Administration procurement scorecard. She pointed out that scorecard measures how well federal agencies reach small business and socioeconomic prime and subcontracting goals. She stated the VA's small business goal was 28.2 percent, and they were currently at 29.3 percent. She also said 22.5 percent of contracting dollars have been awarded to service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses, whereas the goal is 15 percent. She said VA surpassed its WOSB goal of 17 percent with 22 percent.

Another area of VA's initiatives is the Women Veteran-Owned Small Business program. This is a pioneering program that provides access to cross-agency small business support services, education, capital, and resources. They had 30 female entrepreneurs graduate from this program in October 2019, and 100 female entrepreneurs are expected to graduate this year.

Veteran-owned small businesses and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses were awarded over 34,000 contracts in FY20. OSDBU reviewed over 1,100 procurement review packages, also known as 2268s, and worked with contract and program office staff to provide direction for including small businesses in VA's future procurement. For VA, firms that are verified with the Veterans First Contacting Program can do business quickly, including bidding on set-asides and sole-source contracts. More than 14,800 cases have been processed with an average of about 34 a day. Additionally, VA's recently implemented simplified reverification process averages five days.

She also stated that the VA recently passed the ISO 9001:2015 certification. ISO stands for International Standards for Organization and is a voluntary initiative that shows commitment to consistent results and the pursuit of continuous improvement.

She stated that the VA OSDBU were very active in connecting procurement decision-makers with small businesses, swiftly pivoting to virtual-based networking, and completing 49 of them, with most evaluations rated as very good or excellent. VA also offers information on training resources on how to do business with the VA. The VA website has been viewed almost 1.7 million times in FY20, and 47 percent of those views are from return visitors. VA sent electronic newsletters to about 785,000 customers, and Twitter impressions numbered close to 200,000.

Mathew Blum-Office of Federal Procurement Policy, Office of Management and Budget:

Mr. Blum stated that OMB issued OMB Memorandum M 20-27 that summarized a variety of steps that agencies have taken with businesses to emphasize acquisition efficiencies, including virtual industry days, virtual requirements development, use of video proposals, virtual technical demonstrations, remote source selections; again, strategies that are not only keeping us running but hopefully doing so in a better way. OFPP was also very pleased that the director of OMB issued memorandum M 20-28, on buying for America, not only recognizing the economic power of the Government as the world's largest buyer to help lift the marketplace, but also the power of small businesses as the engine of our economy. He also stated the OMB administration issued an executive order, 13932, on modernizing and reforming assessment and hiring of federal jobs. The purpose of the order was to increase the use of skills and competency-based hiring for employment with the Federal Government instead of simply looking at educational achievements.

Fran Perez-Wilhite, North Carolina Military Business Center: Ms. Perez-Wilhite discussed NCMBC's 2020 Southeastern Regional Federal Construction Infrastructure and Environmental Summit, which took place virtually in October and was extremely well attended with well over 500 attendees. She thanked the following – DOD, VA VISN 6, VA OSDBU, GSA, EPA, and the U.S. Department of State – for their participation and providing outstanding sessions. She also cited another event where NCMBC teamed up with the SBA North Carolina District Office to co-host a webinar that was entitled Unlocking the 8(a) Business Development Program, which was a huge success with over 200 attendees.

Michael (Mike) Phipps, American Legion: Mr. Phipps stated that the American Legion participated in a few events. On March 11, the American Legion held a conference in Washington D.C. On June 2, the SBA had a Financial Strategies webinar hosted with the SBA and the Foresight CFO. On June 26, there was another event where the Veterans Employment Education Division hosted a small business webinar with the SBA and Capital Bank to discuss the Paycheck Protection Program and answered last-minute questions before that application period closed.

He also stated that the American Legion testified twice in Congress and sent five letters of support for legislation that helped veteran-owned small businesses. Some of the big successes were the elimination of the funding fee for veteran service member spouses applying for SBA-

guaranteed loans. The funding fee waiver was lost in October 2019 through March 2020. The American Legion made regaining the fee waiver a priority for the 116th Congress. He also stated that there was a massive grass roots advocacy campaign, and it was part of the National Commander's testimony to the Joint House and Senate Veteran Affairs Committee hearing. He also said that the American Legion was instrumental in the inclusion of 501(c)(19) organizations in the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program and Paycheck Protection Program in the CARES Act. This ensured that there was a suspension of the SBA character eligibility requirement for traditional VSOs' reliance on gaming activities for fundraising. Fundraising is not a barrier to federal programs.

Amy B. Garcia, Veterans Business Analyst, Policy and Engagement, OVBD – VOSB Access to Surplus Property: Ms. Garcia introduced Surplus Property Program key stakeholders, provided a quick update on what SBA is doing to prepare for the implementation, and introduced the committee to key SBA staff that will be involved in helping VOSBs. Ms. Garcia discussed the background on the legislation, rulemaking process and next steps, and stakeholder roles with implementation.

Public Forum Discussion – Mr. Stan Kurtz opened the meeting up to the public forum for questions or comments. There were two comments regarding taxation on PPP loans and the concern with the impact on small businesses. There were no further questions or comments, and Mr. Kurtz concluded the public forum.

Adjournment – Mr. Green thanked committee members for their participation and then the meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m. ET.