

# NEWSLETTER

SBA Office of Veterans Business Development

Summer 2025



## LETTER FROM ELIAS HERNANDEZ

As we continue to chart our course in 2025, I would like to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude, especially as we celebrated Military Appreciation Month and Military Spouse Appreciation Day in May. Thank you to all those who have served and to the military spouses whose sacrifices, resilience, and entrepreneurial spirit have a lasting impact on our communities and economy.

I had the privilege of attending VETS25, an event I found energizing and deeply rewarding. From participating in panel discussions with 1,200 business owners in attendance to sharing U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) resources with veteran business owners,

I was reminded just how powerful our work together can be. I learned the most, however, from the quieter moments—those one-on-one conversations with business owners who shared their ideas, struggles, and successes with honesty and heart. Those conversations are already shaping new strategies within the Office of Veterans Business Development (OVBD), and I'll carry them with me as we build what's next.

One of the efforts I'm particularly excited about is the SBA's new "Make Onshoring Great Again" portal, [announced](#) by Administrator Loeffler in May. This initiative provides a streamlined way for U.S. small businesses to connect, buy, and sell domestically produced goods, strengthening supply chains and supporting American manufacturing.

The portal was one central highlight during Administrator Loeffler's testimony to the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship on May 21. The hearing, titled Fueling America's Manufacturing Comeback, covered the Made in America Manufacturing Finance Act of 2025 which will supercharge the return of American manufacturing, empowering job creators with needed capital to onshore production, rebuild critical supply chains, and double the 7(a) and 504 loan caps for small manufacturers.

Administrator Loeffler also shared that the SBA has seen manufacturing loan approvals increase by 74% in the 7(a) program and loans to the smallest businesses – those with five or fewer employees – have nearly doubled. Equally encouraging, the share of federal contracts going to small businesses continues to increase.

In other news, the SBA recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to strengthen support of veteran small business owners. Both the SBA and VA recognize the unique skills veterans bring to the business community and stand behind them through improved access to programs and resources. I'm excited at what this collaboration means for veterans pursuing entrepreneurial endeavors!

As always, we are committed to ensuring that veterans, military spouses, and service members have the tools and support they need to thrive as business owners. Thank you for the incredible work you do to move this mission forward every day.

Additionally, I invite you to follow the SBA (@SBAgov) and Administrator Loeffler (@SBA\_Kelly) on social media.

Let's keep the momentum going.

### Elias Hernandez

Associate Administrator

Office of Veterans Business Development

U.S. Small Business Administration

## POLICY AND ENGAGEMENT

### SBA and VA Partner to Power Veteran Entrepreneurship

The SBA and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) have established a collaborative partnership through a signed MOU to support veterans, particularly those with service-connected disabilities, in pursuing entrepreneurship via the VA's Veteran Readiness & Employment program (VR&E, also known as Chapter 31).

The VR&E program for entrepreneurship is called the VR&E Self-Employment track. Key benefits include business planning support, training and skill development, financial assistance, ongoing counseling and support, and enhanced access to SBA resources. This collaboration helps break down barriers and makes it easier for service-disabled veterans who are working with the VA to connect with SBA resources.

The SBA team (spearheaded by the VBOCs) helps veterans navigate to applicable resources (business plan development, SBA entrepreneurship training courses, etc.). Additionally, it supports the VA in the vetting and approval process. If the VA approves a veteran for VR&E self-employment, the VA provides financial support in the form of business-related training and/or equipment and supplies for the start-up business.

By aligning their efforts, the SBA and VA are making it easier for veterans to turn their ideas into viable ventures and access the tools they need to succeed. This collaboration, effective through 2028, signals a long-term commitment to empowering those who have served with real opportunities to thrive in the business world. Learn more about the [Veteran Readiness and Employment track](#).



**Dean Wegner**  
U.S. Army Veteran  
Founder & CEO, Authentically American

## SUCCESS STORIES

### Veteran-Owned Authentically American Grows with SBA Support

After serving in the U.S. Army, Dean Wegner founded Authentically American—a premium apparel company with a mission to revive U.S. manufacturing and honor those who serve. By tapping into U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) partner resources, such as the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, and the Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC), Wegner was able to pay his employees during the COVID-19 shutdown and scale his business. Today, Authentically American is a thriving brand recognized as SBA's 2024 Veteran Business of the Year. This success highlights how SBA programs help veteran-owned businesses grow with purpose.

[Watch the full story.](#)

Watch the full story here



# WE FOUGHT FOR FREEDOM



## SUCCESS STORIES

### Service, Strength, and Supply: Veterans in U.S. Manufacturing

Veteran-owned manufacturing businesses are playing a critical role in revitalizing American industry. With their deep leadership experience, technical skills, and commitment to service, veterans are uniquely positioned to drive innovation, rebuild domestic supply chains, and strengthen our national economy. These businesses create high-quality jobs, support local communities, and contribute to the resilience of key sectors like defense, aerospace, and medical technology.

The SBA is dedicated to supporting veteran entrepreneurs in the manufacturing sector. Through access to capital, contracting assistance, and training programs, the SBA provides the tools needed to start, grow, and scale businesses. Discover how the SBA prioritizes American manufacturing. [Watch the video.](#)

Watch the video here



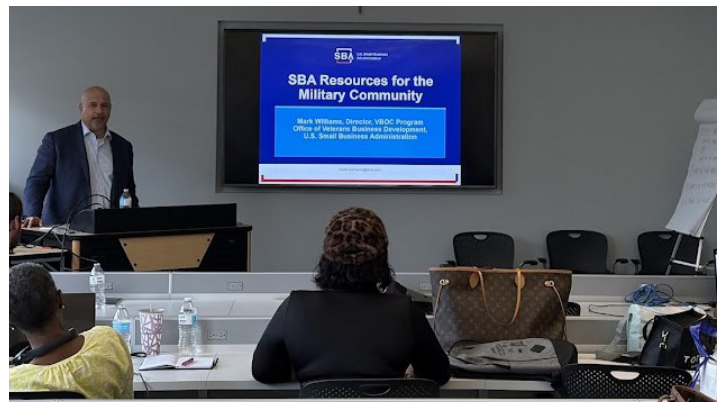
### Interagency Task Force to Convene on Veteran Small Business Priorities

The Interagency Task Force for Small Business Development (IATF) was established by Public Law 110-186 and created by Executive Order in 2008. Chaired by the SBA, the task force includes representatives from the SBA's Office of Veterans Business Development, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Treasury, VA, the General Services Administration (GSA), Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and four veteran service or military organizations.

The IATF focuses on expanding opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses through coordinated interagency efforts in areas like access to capital, contracting, and business development.

Its first meeting of the year will occur on [July 15 from 1-3 p.m.](#), where members will discuss veteran small business policy and upcoming priorities.

For further information, email [veteransbusiness@sba.gov](mailto:veteransbusiness@sba.gov).



*OVBD's Mark Williams gives a presentation about SBA resource for the military community to a room of veterans interested in entrepreneurship, franchising, consulting, and investing.*





## Empowering Veteran Entrepreneurs: SBA's Elias Hernandez Highlights Resources at VIB Express Connect

On April 24, 2025, Elias Hernandez, Associate Administrator for OVBD, joined the Veterans In Business (VIB) Network's Express Connect event in Washington, DC. Speaking to a room full of veteran entrepreneurs, agency officials, and corporate leaders, Associate Administrator Hernandez shared key insights on the current landscape of veteran-owned small businesses. He spotlighted SBA initiatives such as the Veteran Small Business Certification (VetCert) program and the nationwide network of VBOCs, which provide crucial training and mentorship to help veterans and military spouses launch and grow their businesses. His remarks emphasized the SBA's continuing commitment to connect veteran entrepreneurs with resources, contracts, and community support.



*SBA Office of Veteran Business Development (OVBD) Associate Administrator Elias Hernandez giving opening remarks to attendees at the VIB Express Connect conference.*

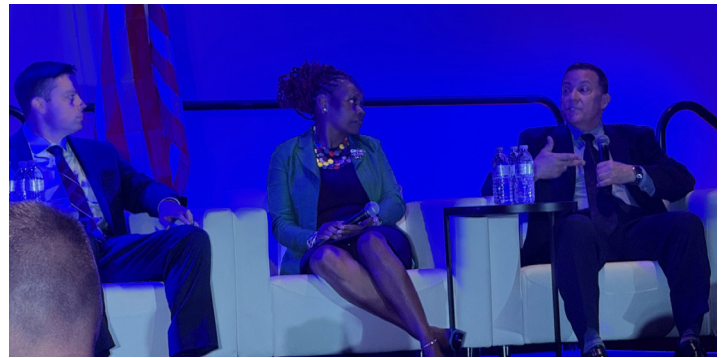
## SBA Leaders Join VETS25 to Champion Veteran-Owned Business Growth

As part of the National Veteran Small Business Coalition's (NVSBC) annual event, the VETS25 Conference was held on May 14–15, 2025, at the Rosen Centre in Orlando, Florida. More than 1,200 participants—including veteran-owned small business (VOSB) leaders, federal officials, and

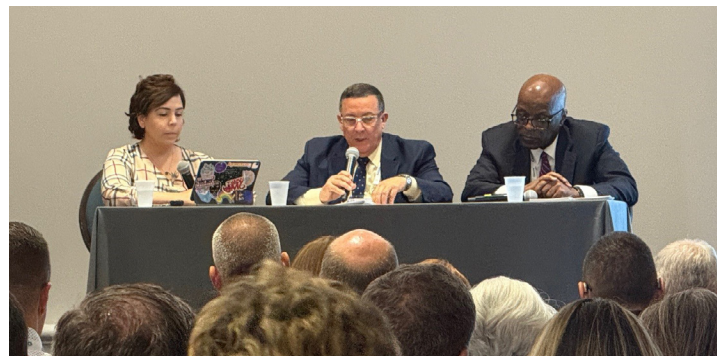
prime contractors—gathered to explore policies, partnerships, and programs that support veteran entrepreneurs.

Day one opened with a keynote session featuring Elias Hernandez, Associate Administrator of the SBA's OVBD, alongside senior leaders from federal agencies. The panel, focused on executive leadership perspectives, underscored the government's commitment to fostering small business success within the veteran community.

On day two, Hernandez was joined by Larry Stubblefield, Deputy Administrator of SBA's Office of Government Contracting and Business Development. Their session highlighted key SBA programs designed to expand access to capital, enhance



*(L to R) General Services Administration Acting Associate Administrator Andrew Tulli, Office of Small Business Programs and Industry Engagements, Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency Chief Ruby Crenshaw-Lawrence, SBA Office of Veterans Business Development Associate Administrator Elias Hernandez*



*(L to R) G2X Chief Operating Officer and Moderator Alexa Tsui, SBA Office of Veterans Business Development Associate Administrator Elias Hernandez, SBA Office of Government Contracting and Business Development Deputy Administrator Larry Stubblefield*

federal procurement readiness, and boost the long-term growth of veteran-owned firms.

In addition to policy discussions, the VETS25 agenda included more than 60 breakout sessions and training workshops on topics such as succession planning, cybersecurity, and navigating the federal acquisitions process. Matchmaking events and networking opportunities helped attendees connect directly with federal buyers and industry partners.

The conference concluded with a renewed focus on collaboration and the tools available to help veterans grow and sustain their businesses. VETS25 reaffirmed the vital role that veterans play in the U.S. economy and the continued importance of supporting their entrepreneurial journeys through federal resources and partnerships.

## SBA Celebrates Flag Day and Veterans

The Office of Veterans Business Development Associate Administrator and Army veteran with 24-years of service, Elias Hernandez, spoke at a Flag Day ceremony outside SBA HQ.

He shared, “As a proud veteran, I’ve had the honor of serving under our flag, and I can tell you, there’s nothing like seeing it fly in the wind, knowing how much it stands for. It’s not just stars and stripes. It’s sacrifice. It’s opportunity. It’s the belief that America is still the greatest country on Earth. And today, we honor that belief, alongside our veterans, our communities, and the small business owners who keep this country strong.”



*SBA Office of Veterans Business Development (OVBD) Associate Administrator Elias Hernandez introduced SBA Administrator Loeffler alongside other OVBD veteran colleagues at SBA's Flag Day ceremony.*

Many other OVBD team members stood alongside SBA Administrator Loeffler as veterans from different military branches.

## Save the Date for National Veterans Small Business Week

The SBA has announced the dates for the 12th Annual National Veterans Small Business Week (NVSBW), scheduled to take place from November 3 to 7, 2025. Each November, NVSBW celebrates and empowers veteran, service member, National Guard and Reserve, and military spouse entrepreneurs across the country. The campaign raises awareness of the economic contributions of veteran-owned small businesses, encourages community support, and connects entrepreneurs with valuable SBA resources.

This year's campaign will center around the theme of **Honoring Veteran-Owned, American Made**, designed to highlight the strength, innovation, and impact of the military-connected business community. Participants will have the opportunity to attend a mix of in-person and virtual events hosted by SBA field offices and resource partners nationwide, along with digital outreach, stakeholder engagement, and recognition of outstanding veteran-owned businesses.



## VETERANS BUSINESS OUTREACH CENTERS

Veteran Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs) are a vital resource for veterans, service members, and military spouses who aspire to become entrepreneurs. These centers offer personalized business counseling, training, and mentoring designed to help participants navigate the path to successful business ownership. From developing business plans to understanding funding options, VBOCs provide the foundational support needed to start and grow small businesses.

The VBOC at the McNulty Veteran Business Center (NY/NJ) recently hosted a business development workshop on June 17, 2025, for service-disabled veterans interested in small business certifications. Attendees explored how to get certified with both State and Federal agencies, what additional resources are available, and how to start networking and selling to State and Federal agencies.

## ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### Boots to Business

SBA's Boots to Business (B2B) program provides service members and military spouses with the essential knowledge and tools needed to successfully launch their own small businesses after transitioning from military to civilian life. B2B gives participants insight into business ownership and prepares them for entrepreneurship.

The VBOC for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands held a B2B class at Army Garrison Fort Buchanan in Puerto Rico. Army Brig. Gen. Carlos Gorbea, Commanding General of the 1st Mission Support Command, and Garrison Command Sergeant Major Kimberly Bergman Gandara spoke with class participants about their personal experiences as entrepreneurs and taught them about the first steps to opening a small business.

Syracuse University D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, which hosts B2B overseas, closed out the grant year with 141 courses completed and more than 2,000 service member participants!

Learn more about B2B and explore upcoming classes at [sba.my.site.com](https://sba.my.site.com).



*Army Brig. Gen. Carlos Gorbea, Commanding General of the 1st Mission Support Command, offers a motivational and inspirational speech to class participants, based on his own success as an entrepreneur.*



*Garrison Command Sergeant Major, Sgt. Maj. Kimberly Bergman Gandara gives closing remarks to Fort Buchanan soldiers at the end of their Boots to Business class. Brig. Gen. Gorbea, and Juan Marrero of the VBOC for Puerto Rico & USVI look on.*

## Boots to Business Reboot

Boots to Business Reboot (B2B Reboot) is an entrepreneurial training program designed for veterans who have already transitioned out of military service. Based on the original Boots to Business course, B2B Reboot gives veterans from all eras the opportunity to gain practical business skills—covering topics like market research, business planning, and funding options—to help them launch and grow successful small businesses.

Learn more about B2B Reboot and find upcoming classes at [sba.my.site.com](https://sba.my.site.com).

## Boots to Business Revenue Readiness

The Boots to Business Revenue Readiness ([B2BRR](#)) course, delivered virtually by Mississippi State University, serves as an advanced follow-on class for those who have completed a B2B, B2B Reboot, or Pathway to Business course. This program provides more comprehensive training, guiding participants through the process of creating a detailed business plan and preparing to launch their small businesses. Live, online classes are offered at six different times to accommodate the work schedules for veterans and military members who participate from locations around the world—four of them offered at night, a unique benefit exclusively for veterans and military spouses. B2BRR has had more than 4,300 graduates from all 50 states and many OCONUS locations, which reflects the tremendous success of its program. Feedback from more than 750 students who responded to surveys reinforce the value of this course:

- 99% Understand how to develop a value proposition for their business
- 99% Have a better understanding of the importance of having a business plan
- 92% Plan to move forward with the business plan developed in this course
- 96% Developed an understanding of the free resources available to veteran entrepreneurs
- 97% Would recommend this course to other veteran entrepreneurs



*Bob Blakely, a former B2BRR instructor and VBOC counselor, was recognized as the Mississippi SBA Veteran Champion of the Year award winner in Jackson, MS.*

*Pictured L to R: Debbie Scott, RR Director, Bob Blakely, MS Veteran Champion 2025, Patti Blakely, Bob's Wife, Natalie Rhodes, Program Coordinator, Mark Scott, VBOC at MSU Director.*



## Here is what some participants are saying about the program:

“The Boots to Business course is an invaluable resource and the first step in shifting your mindset from wearing your military patrol cap to donning the top hat of a business owner. This transition is critical for success in the self-employed sector. This course helps bridge that gap, offering essential knowledge, resources, and guidance on how to structure, develop, and seek mentorship for a successful entrepreneurial journey.”

“The program provided a clear and actionable roadmap for developing my business plan, with in-depth sessions on market analysis, revenue strategy, and target industry segmentation. The instructors and guest speakers were incredibly knowledgeable and supportive, offering practical insights and one-on-one mentorship that directly impacted my business approach. As a result, I feel more confident and equipped to scale my business, having gained essential tools and strategies to address challenges and pursue growth effectively. I highly recommend this program to anyone looking to elevate their business planning and execution.”

### Military Spouse Pathway to Business

The Military Spouse Pathway to Business program is offered both live, in person and as a virtual, on-demand course. The SBA's MySBA Learning platform is a powerful online resource designed to provide entrepreneurs with the tools they need to succeed, at no cost, in a self-paced format, and accessible anytime, anywhere. The curriculum introduces key entrepreneurial concepts like market research, economic fundamentals, legal considerations, and financial planning. While modeled after the B2B and B2B Reboot programs, the Military Spouse Pathway to Business is tailored to better serve military spouses.

Visit [sba.gov/learning](https://sba.gov/learning) to get started with Military Spouse Pathway to Business on the MySBA Learning platform.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM UPDATES

### Entrepreneurship Training Programs for Veterans and Military Spouses

Thousands of veterans and military spouses are collectively served by Entrepreneurship Training Programs (ETP) annually, providing participants with

resources and support to succeed as entrepreneurs. Use the provided links to learn more, connect with transformational training opportunities, and register for upcoming courses.

### Service-Disabled Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Programs

- **Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans**

Saint Joseph's University (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) offers the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans (EBV) program annually, providing post-9/11 veterans with comprehensive training, mentorship, and resources to start or grow their businesses. While the 2025 cohort has concluded, applications are accepted year-round through Syracuse University, with opportunities to attend EBV at any of the eight participating campuses. [Learn more.](#)

- **National Veterans Entrepreneurship Program**

Oklahoma State University's (Stillwater, Oklahoma) Riata Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship hosts the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program (VEP), designed for veterans interested in starting or expanding their businesses. The program includes an online, self-study phase followed by an intensive in-person





boot camp located in Stillwater, Oklahoma. The 15th annual VEP was recently held, and applications for the next cohort opened on June 16. [Learn more.](#)

- **Veteran Entrepreneurial Training and Resource Network (VETRN)**

VETRN (Norton, Massachusetts) is proud to recognize and congratulate Russ Collins, owner of Home Innovations Corp. of Epping, New Hampshire, a 2018 graduate of the VETRN Program, who was named the **2025 New Hampshire SBA Veteran-Owned Small Business of the Year**. Collins received this honor at the recent May 2025 SBA New Hampshire Awards Ceremony in Manchester, New Hampshire.

New Hampshire Small Business Awards were presented to seven additional well-deserving recipients. In addition to Amy Bassett, New Hampshire SBA District Director, also attending the awards ceremony were U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Maggie Hassan, U.S. Congressman Chris Pappas, U.S. Congresswoman Maggie Goodlander, and New England Regional SBA Administrator Peter Steele.

VETRN teaches veteran small business owners how to grow their businesses successfully. Applicants undergo a competitive selection process, which includes a written application and an interview. [Learn more.](#)



*Pictured: Peter Steele, SBA Regional Administrator, Lee Goldberg, VETRN President, Russ Collins, Owner of Home Innovations Corp. and Amy Bassett, NH SBA District Director.*

- **Warrior Rising**

Warrior Rising (South Jordan, Utah) put on a new program for service-disabled veterans called SDVETP LaunchPoint. The program started on June 5 and concluded its last weekly session on June 26. SDVETP LaunchPoint is a starting point—a place to explore ideas, test assumptions and begin aligning what matters most.

The course helps service-disabled veterans walk away with:

- A clear understanding of whether business is the right path for you.
- 1–2 solid business ideas shaped by your experience.
- Insight into your ideal customer and your competitive space.
- A simple model to test your idea's potential.
- An overview of Warrior Rising and other resources for SDVETs.

To learn more about Warrior Rising or its new SDVETP LaunchPoint course, visit their website. [Learn more.](#)

## **Women Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Programs**

- **Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (V-WISE)**

The Syracuse University D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families'

V-WISE (Syracuse, New York) offers entrepreneurship training to women veterans and military spouses. Interested individuals can sign up to be notified when applications reopen. [Learn more.](#)

- **ONABEN: Beyond the Boots: A Veteran and Service Member Initiative**

On May 18, ONABEN (Tulsa, Oklahoma) proudly hosted an in-person training event designed to support and inspire current and aspiring entrepreneurs. The day was packed with practical tools, valuable insights, and community connection—all aimed at helping small business owners thrive.

Participants engaged in a series of interactive sessions on key topics, including:

- How to Best Use AI
- Social Media Marketing Strategies
- Creating Loyal Customers Through Your Brand Story
- Savings Strategies for Short-Term Goals
- Prioritizing Personal Health for Sustainable Success



ONABEN hosted an Empowering Entrepreneurs event in person on May 18.

The highlight of the day came when several passionate entrepreneurs took the stage to present their business plans. These powerful presentations went beyond the “what” of their businesses and dove into the heart of the “why,” sharing the purpose and passion that fuel their work.

If you’re interested in attending their next event or want to learn more about their programs, please visit their website. [Learn more.](#)

- **Startup Training Resources to Inspire Veteran Entrepreneurship (STRIVE)**

The Utah Veteran Business Resource Center (VBRC) at Salt Lake Community College (Salt Lake City, Utah) hosted its 9th Annual Veteran-Owned Business Conference on May 9. OVBD’s Associate Administrator, Elias Hernandez, virtually provided opening remarks, celebrated the program’s “Minnow Tank” winners, and emphasized SBA’s support of the VBRC and its available resources. The STRIVE program provides one-on-one mentorship, access to local and national entrepreneurial networks, and ongoing post-program support. The next cohort is scheduled to begin the week of September 9. [Learn more.](#)



Becky Guertler (far right in photo) Director of the Utah Veteran Business Resource Center moderates a panel at the Veteran Owned Business Conference.

Pictured L to R: Erika Andresen, EAAS Consulting; Rick Brown, Big Sky VBOC; Ashely Louder, Uintah Basis Veterans; Ashlee Matthews, Utah House of Representatives; Meghan McFall, ashTEC; Ryan Rutland, Refuge Industries (veteran-owned business); Becky Guertler, Director, Utah Veteran Business Resource Center



## Veteran Federal Procurement Entrepreneurship Training Program

### Veteran Institute for Procurement (VIP)

The [Veteran Institute for Procurement](#) (Rockville, Maryland) had an exceptional spring season. Following the 3,000th milestone graduation in March, the program successfully trained an additional 68 veterans with small businesses through its VIP START and VIP ADVANCE programs in April and May.

Looking ahead, VIP is ramping up for VIP GROW (June 10-12) and VIP START training (June 24-26). They anticipate welcoming nearly 90 more veteran entrepreneurs into the VIP community!

VIP offers a range of specialized programs tailored to businesses at different growth stages—from those new to government contracting to more advanced firms seeking to expand or enter new markets, including aerospace and international trade. Each program is free of charge and led by industry experts, offering in-depth instruction on topics such as compliance, strategic planning, business development, and proposal preparation. [Learn more.](#)



VIP held a graduation ceremony for its 47 VIP START program participants on May 22, 2025 at the Bolger Center in Potomac, MD.

Pictured L to R: Barbara Ashe, National Director, Veteran Institute for Procurement; Dobbs Defense Solutions LLC President & CEO (MCCCF Foundation Board Member and VIP Alumni) Erica Dobbs; Avian LLC CEO (VIP Alumni) Kevin Switick; Aalis Management Consulting LLC President & CEO (VIP Alumni) Ebony Wilkins; Set Point Solutions CEO (VIP Grad and SBIR Phase I recipient) Joseph Brown; T12 Technologies CEO (VIP Alumni) Tamika Chance; BAE Systems, Inc. Director, Small Business Programs, Intelligence & Security (VIP Sponsor & Instructor) Diane G. Dempsey; SBA Office of Veterans Business Development Veterans Business Specialist Jerry Godwin

## RED TAPE HOTLINE

The SBA's Office of Advocacy empowers you to make your voice heard in the regulatory process. If you have a concern with a federal regulation, visit [advocacy.sba.gov/hotline](https://advocacy.sba.gov/hotline).

## ONSHORING PORTAL

The **SBA's Make Onshoring Great Again Portal** is a free digital tool designed to help small businesses strengthen their supply chains by connecting with verified U.S.-based manufacturers and suppliers. The portal gives businesses access to extensive directories of American production partners. By making it easier to source goods domestically, the tool supports small manufacturers, reduces dependency on foreign supply chains, and promotes long-term economic resilience. Entrepreneurs looking to manufacture or shift production back to the U.S. can explore the portal at [sba.gov/onshoring](https://sba.gov/onshoring).

## QUESTIONS? CONTACT US

[veteransbusiness@sba.gov](mailto:veteransbusiness@sba.gov)

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## CALL FOR SUCCESS STORIES!

We are always looking for new success stories to feature in various formats, from social media and blogs to videos. If you have a story, email [Jeffrey.Alexander@sba.gov](mailto:Jeffrey.Alexander@sba.gov).



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