

# **Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development**

Wednesday, March 3, 2021 | 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. ET

Virtual Meeting Minutes

**IATF Members:** Mathew Blum, Will Hubbard, Bill Metheny Fran Perez-Wilhite, Mike Phipps, Sharon Ridley, Larry Stubblefield, Houston Taylor

**OVBD Participants:** Amy Garcia, Stan Kurtz, Taylor Starkman, Larry Stubblefield, and Star Wilbraham

The virtual meeting of the Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development (IATF) took place on March 3, 2021.

**Call to Order:** Mr. Larry Stubblefield, IATF Designated Federal Officer (DFO), called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. ET.

**Introduction/Meeting Logistics:** Stan Kurtz took roll call.

**Opening and Welcoming Remarks:** Larry Stubblefield, Associate Administrator, Office of Veterans Business Development (OVBD) welcomed the Task Force members and began his briefing by informing the Task Force and the public that SBA is awaiting SBA Administrator nominee Isabelle Guzman's Senate confirmation. Mr. Stubblefield provided updates on the following areas of interest:

**VOSB access to Federally donated personal surplus property:** Public Law 115-416 "Veterans Small Business Enhancement Act" allows veteran owned small businesses to access to federal property; SBA is working with GSA & VA to get VOSBs access to program. Veteran business owners are reaching out to Congress and SBA requesting information on when the program will be available. SBA is monitoring the status of the signing of an MOA between each State Agency for Surplus Property, GSA, and SBA, required to be in place before VOSBs can access the program in their home state.

**FedBizOpps system move to beta.sam.gov:** Mr. Stubblefield noted OVBD is monitoring the transition of GSA's FedbizOpps to beta.sam.gov. OVBD and ACVBA chairwomen are working with GSA to make it more efficient.

**CVE to SBA:** OVBD is working with VA on FY21 National Defense Authorization Act that calls for the transfer of the Center for Verification and Evaluation (CVE) from VA to SBA that will take two years to complete.

**Boots to Business (B2B) Program:** B2B is part of the DoD Transition Assistance Program. B2B has held 900 classes at 160 installations around the world. Due to the pandemic, the classes were conducted via virtual environment, but will slowly move back to in person. About 40% of B2B classes are in person.

**PPP Emergency Funding:** SBA is working with Treasury and other financial support to help small businesses stay up and running.

**VBOC Program:** We have 22 centers and have done over 5,000 counseling sessions and 250 training events to help support veterans' small businesses communities.

**Underserved Markets:** President Biden signed an Executive Order for Federal agencies to aid underserved markets. SBA will have to report to the White House.

Mr. Stubblefield stated that when the SBA Deputy Administrator is confirmed, by law and charter, he/she may become the chairman of the IATF committee. SBA does have a political appointee who works the federal goaling. 23% of federal contracting goes to small businesses and 3% goal for veteran disabled owned small businesses.

**Mr. Stan Kurtz, Director, Policy and Engagement, Office of Veterans Business**

**Development:** Provided an update on military spouse outreach. He stated that in August 2020, SBA hosted a Military Spouse Entrepreneurship Summit with Second Lady Pence's office and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes. Over 1,800 military spouses signed up and 900 of them joined. In January, we started monthly webinars and entrepreneurship webinars for military spouses. Next webinar is scheduled for March 16, 2021 and it will happen for the remainder of the year. An entrepreneurship summit with Hiring Our Heroes for military spouses living overseas is planned for May 2021.

OVBD is working closely with SBA's Office of Government Contracting, GSA, State Agency for Surplus Property (SASP) representatives and VA on a signing an MOA. OVBD will market and provide training on the surplus property program that allows VOSBs to access donated property and will work closely with stakeholders to craft and distribute information via social media and SBA's website.

**Mr. Bill Metheny-Director, Veterans Employment & Training Service, Department of**

**Labor:** The Veterans Employment & Training Service focuses are: (1) Transition Process for Services Members; and (2) Strategic Partnership. The unemployment rate for veterans for January 2021 was 4.9% and non-veterans was 6.3%. The February stats will be released on March 5, 2021 on the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) website. BLS has veterans supplement data that focuses on veteran-specific topics/questions/issues conducted in the Fall and released in the Spring on March 18, 2021.

**Hire Vets Medallion Program:** Is a program that recognizes employers who are finding, hiring, training, and retaining veterans. The award application period is open right now until April 30; more information can be found at [www.hirevets.gov](http://www.hirevets.gov). Sharing this information with your network is encouraged because there are benefits for the recipients. States around the country are finding ways to tag recipients of the medallion in their job bank data sources, and if a veteran who is looking for an employer wants to hire veterans, they can search for this award and it will filter those recipients.

**Transition Assistance Program:** Serves transitioning service members as they leave the military. Service members that want to go straight into working by using their credentials or apprenticeship, the programs are new and continue to be updated. VETS has a hybrid mix on how they are being delivered and DoD is handling it. If a military installation is open and accepting in-person training, facilitators are there for sessions. If not in-person, then it will be done virtually. Last year, the number of transitioning members decreased slightly maybe due to the economic pandemic; services are still in place. DOL has rolled out special courses for transition employment assistance for military spouses (TEAMS). Go to [www.veterans.gov](http://www.veterans.gov) and click on "Military Spouses." Military spouses can sign up for any four courses that are offered at a variety of different times. Classes are 2-4 hours long. Later in the year, DOL hopes to begin a tailored transition curriculum and delivery system for service members and veterans who are wounded. DOL will start a pilot this spring to partner with several organizations around the country to be able to point and refer those service members to partners depending on what their needs are and what the partner is providing. There are 13 different military sites around the country where navigators will be located that will point service members in the right direction for additional assistance.

DOL is forming the Office of Research and Policy to help shape policies, and already has a women veteran program, and coming this spring, will have a disabled veteran program to focus on service and transitioning members with disabilities.

**Ms. Sharon Ridley- Executive Director, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) Department of Veterans Affairs:** Ms. Ridley stated that President Biden signed an executive order on January 20, 2021 that will advance racial equity and support for underserved communities. This enforces VA to provide equitable support to all communities. Ms. Ridley invited anyone to inform the OSDBU of any barriers in enrolling, accessing VA benefits, services, or procurement contracting opportunities.

On January 1, 2021, Congress passed into law a new National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that requires CVE from VA to SBA within two years. This transfer will require VA to provide an action plan to ensure that there are minimum impacts to veterans. VA and SBA will keep veterans informed throughout the transfer.

**VA Small Business Procurement:** The analysis of FY 2021 small business procurement goals through January 31, 2021, shows VA surpassing its veteran own small business goals. \$1.68 billion contracts went to service-disabled veteran owned small businesses. 23% total contract spend, an 8% higher than the 15% goal. 1.72 billion contracts went to VOSB; while their goal was 17%, they hit 23.6% of total contract spend. VA achieved 31.7% of contract spend with small businesses, passing its goal of 28.45%

**CVE:** Due to Covid-19, applications are minimal; average processing application time is 32 days; simplified verification are completed in five days. OSDBU has held 7 virtual events since Jan 2021. On February 25<sup>th</sup> the first digital on demand virtual event for Palo Alto VA Health Care System was held. Additional events at medical centers will occur throughout the year. The list of the virtual event is forthcoming. The virtual training webinars prepares small businesses for VA Acquisition process; OSDBU business development training webinars with 1,793 people

registered since January 2021. VA held six webinar events. Go to [www.va.gov/osdbu/outreach/soc/training.asp](http://www.va.gov/osdbu/outreach/soc/training.asp) to find events.

**Mr. Mathew Blum-Office of Federal Procurement Policy, Office of Management and Budget:** Mr. Blum said Executive Order 13985 will create an important foundation for OMB's work. A lot of outreach is anticipated by the Executive Order through agencies' self-assessment plans. The E.O. outlines a government approach in tackling "systemic entrenched disparities" by re-thinking and improving how we operate; understanding where there are challenges and opportunities for improvement; how to engage with the community in a most effective way; conducting our training or other steps to ensure that impartiality and effective accomplishments of responsibilities and more. Mr. Blum said that Executive Order 14008 focuses on climate ready supply of products and services and Executive Order 14005 ensuring that the future of America is made in America by all of America's workers. OMB is working with the office of National Economic Council to think about recommendations and procurement and preferences that can be used to grow the domestic manufacturing base.

**Mr. Houston Taylor, GSA:** Mr. Taylor briefed the Task Force on GSA's small business procurement goal achievement. The GSA total eligible dollars was \$5.3 billion and of that, \$26.6 billion went to small business which means 50 percent of their spend was of Small Businesses; Small Disadvantaged-Businesses, 1.2 billion which is 22 percent; Women-Owned Small Businesses was 561 million, nearly 11 percent which is 10.47; Service-Disabled Veterans, 477 million which is nearly 9 percent; and HUBZone, 235 million which is 4.39. That was the year in review exceeding all goals inside the agency.

For 2021, total business dollars eligible out of GSA is 1.6 billion and of that 46.8 percent went to small businesses which is 772 million year-to-date; Small disadvantaged business, 319 million, nearly 20 percent year-to-date; Women-owned, 158 million, nearly 10 percent, 9.60; Service-disabled vet, 130 million, 7.89 percent; and HUBZone, 75 million, 4.56.

He stated that from the IT perspective, they recently awarded second-generation information technology blanket purchase agreements. 50 small businesses were awarded – an estimated volume, 5.5 billion. Ten of those were SDVOSB companies. There were only 70 BPAs awarded: 50 of them to small businesses; 10 of them to service-disabled veteran-owned. How do we ensure that small businesses can meet the demands that are inside the government? The President has put together 11 task forces to look at where are we falling short in some of these commodities or services and what are we going to do about it. Federal agencies, in particular GSA, being heavily involved in just about every executive order.

**Public Comment: A representative of Steri-Tech Medical Innovations, LLC** asked Mr. Taylor, GSA submitted a letter of waiver for three requirements: (1). Experience, two years in business; (2). Past performance; (3). Two years of financial status, is it still complicated to get on GSA and how is that going to help our current businesses move forward in possibly finally getting a GSA schedule number?

**Answer: Mr. Taylor** stated that there are thousands of suppliers on schedule. GSA is consolidating the multi award schedules that Mr. Rodriguez mentioned.

**Ms. Fran Perez-Wilhite, North Carolina Military Business Center:** Ms. Perez-Wilhite stated that the NCMBC is making sure veterans business owners can make it through this pandemic regarding their business, hosting information updates to DFARS and CMMC regulations and they will be doing the North Carolina Installations Construction Prime-Meet-Subcontractor Teaming Outreach and having a cyberchat series this week concentrating on CMMC. Ms. Perez-Wilhite mentioned:

The week of March 15, 2021, NCMBC will be doing a virtual “Defense Contractor Academy (DCA)” and that over 250 companies already signed up for it. The DCA provides the tools needed to grow the federal portion of their business portfolios.

May 18, 2021 - NCMBC we will have the virtual FEDTex event which concentrates on the textile industry and federal contracting.

August 2021- NCMBC will host the Medical Industry Event.

October 2021 - Federal Construction Summit. Call Ms. Perez-Wilhite at (704) 806-6858 to participate.

**Mr. Mike Phipps, American Legion:** Mr. Phipps stated that the American Legion has been working on “Buy America Policy Act.” Mr. Phipps reported that, “The American Legion passed a resolution, that since Covid-19 has caused a weakness in America’s supply chain, we started looking at outsourcing and manufacturing and raw material production having an impact on national security and an over-reliance on foreign-made products.” The American Legion is pushing to increase the number of manufacturers in America to create some of those products, which will also increase jobs and then reduce the reliance on foreign-made products. Mr. Phipps said that Federal agencies often divert a large amount of their budget to contracts with large businesses selling foreign made products when you can get them in America for less.

**Mr. Will Hubbard, Chief of Staff, Student Veterans of America:** Mr. Hubbard mentioned the Annual National Conference held recently was a great success. It was their first time hosting more than 5,000 people in a virtual environment. He mentioned that today is Student Veterans of America’s annual testimony to the Joint House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees, where they release their annual policy priorities. Mr. Hubbard spoke about the continuation of the VET-Tech Act. Late last year, there were some changes in the Isaacson-Rowe Bill, getting rid of the two-year restrictions to have a small business participate and increasing the funds from \$15 million annually to \$45 million annually based on the great interest in that program. Mr. Hubbard stated that the program specifically focuses on providing short-term technologically based training programs for veterans and uses the GI Bill as the standard for eligibility, though it does not tap into GI Bill funds.

## **Public Forum Discussion**

**Question:** Related to the military spouse webinars.

**Answer:** A link was given in the chat room.

**Question:** A request to update the registration form in the military spouse webinars to allow nonveterans to register.

**Question:** Matt Sherwood asked, “Are there any tax credits for businesses that hire veterans?”

**Answer:** Mr. Metheny said that it varies from state-to-state. Check the state website.

**Question:** Describe what markets are considered underserved markets?

**Answer:** Women, people with disabilities, social, ethnic, and disparaging environments. Star Wilbraham sent the link in the chat room.

**Adjourned:** 2:27 p.m. ET