

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6315

May 25, 2023

The Honorable Isabella Casillas Guzman
Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration
409 3rd Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20416

Dear Administrator Guzman:

The Committee on Small Business is reviewing the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) efforts to aid, counsel, and assist veteran entrepreneurs to start and grow their own businesses. These brave men and women put their lives on the line to protect this nation. The skills they gained in the military- such as leadership, teambuilding, and persistence- make them successful small business owners. We must ensure that the programs and resources available to them are being utilized effectively and efficiently.

Veterans face unique challenges, especially when transitioning out of the military and returning to civilian life. Studies show the riskiest time in a recently transitioned veteran's journey is within the first year after returning to civilian life.¹ Military service offers a built-in community with a clear mission and purpose that is lost upon leaving the military.² Entrepreneurship can return a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose, and a goal toward which to strive. One of my highest priorities as Chairman is to authorize the SBA's Boots to Business program, which educates transitioning service members about entrepreneurship.³

Veterans can take advantage of a variety of other resources offered by the SBA, such as the Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs), Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), SCORE Chapters, and Women's Business Centers (WBCs). Collectively, these programs are referred to as the SBA's Resource Partner Network. VBOCs are dedicated specifically to the promotion and support of veteran small business owners. This Committee aims to ensure that the SBA effectively utilizes the Resource Partner Network to reach our nations veterans where they are.

¹ *From Science to Practice: A Risk Factor for Suicide*, U.S. VETERANS HEALTH ADMIN. (May 24, 2019).

² C. Kidd and M. Romaniuk, *The Psychological Adjustment Experience of Reintegration Following Discharge from Military Service: A Systematic Review*, J. OF MILITARY & VETERANS' HEALTH (last visited May 15, 2023).

³ U.S. SMALL BUS. ADMIN, FISCAL YEAR 2024 CONG. BUDGET JUSTIFICATION, 99 (2023).

Rural veterans face additional difficulties when starting businesses, such as inadequate internet and workforce availability.⁴ The SBA's Office of Rural Affairs is supposed to help connect these entrepreneurs with the resources they need to succeed.⁵ With nearly 5 million veterans living in rural areas, it is imperative that these veterans have ample access to the resources their tax dollars fund.⁶

Our nation's veterans deserve the best possible assistance as they transition to post-military life. The Committee therefore requests answers to the following questions as soon as possible, but no later than June 8, 2023:

1. How does the SBA plan to coordinate the Resource Partner Network to better assist veterans, including those located in rural areas?
2. What needs do veteran entrepreneurs have that are not being adequately addressed by the SBA's current resources?
3. What is the SBA doing to meet the needs of veteran entrepreneurs through partnerships with the private sector?
4. How will the SBA improve outreach and education to veterans about the resources available to them?
5. How do our nations veterans that are not located near a currently funded VBOC access the resources they need to succeed?

To schedule the delivery of responsive documents or ask any follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Small Business Majority Staff at (202) 225-5821. The Committee on Small Business has broad authority to investigate "problems of all types of small business" under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



Roger Williams
Chairman
Committee on Small Business

⁴ *Infographic: Rural Entrepreneurship*, SCORE (last visited May 22, 2023)
<https://www.score.org/resource/infographic/infographic-rural-entrepreneurship>

⁵ 15 U.S.C. § 653.

⁶ News Release, U.S. Census Bureau, Nearly One-Quarter of Veterans Live in Rural Areas (Jan 25, 2017).