

Small Business Assistance for Veterans

There's a wealth of information and resources readily available for U.S. service members wanting to start or grow small businesses after leaving active duty.

Through its Office of Veterans Business Development, The U.S. Small Business Administration and its resource partners can assist transitioning service members nationwide with loan guaranties, business counseling and training, and access to federal contracts.

The SBA has a Veterans Business Development Officer at each of its 70 district offices. They're experts in the full range of SBA programs. Additionally the Office of Veterans Business Development funds Veterans Business Outreach Centers to provide hands-on assistance, e-counseling and referrals to your nearest SBA office.

Two specific SBA Web sites are maintained for veterans. The first, www.sba.gov/VETS, is primarily focused on veterans and service-disabled veterans. The second, www.sba.gov/reservists, emphasizes services for self-employed Reserve and National Guard members who have been, or may be called to federalized active duty through Title 10.

The SBA's wide range of services and programs for veterans include:

SBA Loan Guaranties

- **7(a) Loans.** The primary SBA loan program provides guaranties to participating lenders to encourage access to capital that would not otherwise be available to small businesses without the guaranty. These loans may be used for business start-ups, expansion, equipment purchases, working capital, inventory or real-estate acquisition. A 7(a) loan cannot exceed \$2 million. For loans under \$150,000, the SBA guaranties 75 percent. For larger loans, the guaranty is 85 percent, up to a maximum guaranteed amount of \$1 million.
- **LowDoc Loans.** The low documentation loans feature a one-page SBA application and fast turnaround for loans under \$150,000.
- **CAPLines.** This program provides for short-term working capital needs, such as seasonal lines of credit, contract lines of credit and builders' lines of credit.,
- **504 Loans.** These loans are for long-term, fixed-asset financing and are made through SBA-approved community development companies in conjunction with private lenders.

Microloans. Through nonprofit intermediaries, loans up to \$35,000 are available to small businesses needing smaller amounts of capital for start-up and business expansion. The maximum term is six years, and interest rates are negotiated with the intermediary.

Military Reservist Economic Injury Disaster Loans

- Loans of up to \$1.5 million can help small businesses sustain operations when an essential employee or owner is called to federal active duty as a military reservist. These loans are intended only to provide the amount of working capital needed by a small business to pay its necessary obligations as they mature until operations return to normal after the essential employee is released from active military duty. The purpose of these loans is not to cover lost income or lost profits. MREIDL funds cannot be used to take the place of regular commercial debt, to refinance long-term debt or to expand the business. More information is available at: http://www.sba.gov/disaster_recov/loaninfo/militaryreservist.html.

Venture Capital

- **Small Business Investment Companies.** Licensed and regulated by the SBA, these privately owned and managed companies invest venture capital and start-up financing in small businesses.

Surety Bond Guarantee Program

- Under this program, the SBA can guarantee bid, performance and payment bonds on contracts up to \$2 million for eligible small businesses that cannot obtain bonds through regular, commercial channels.

Growing Your Business

- **SCORE counseling.** SCORE, Counselors to America's Small Business, has nearly 400 offices around the nation to assist entrepreneurs and small business owners with preparing business plans, completing loan applications and business management. The SCORE Web site, www.score.org, has an entire section of help for veterans.
- **Online Training.** The Small Business Training Network is a virtual campus housing free training courses, workshops and knowledge resources designed to assist entrepreneurs and other students of enterprise. The Training Network makes SBA's business management resources available anytime and anywhere to help small businesses compete in a constantly changing, global environment. The Web site is <http://www.sba.gov/training/>.

Federal Contracting Assistance

- **Office of Federal Contract Assistance.** Veterans who are service-disabled and own small businesses have a single point of contact to address questions and concerns and learn about procurement opportunities designated for them. The office helps federal agencies meet their 3 percent prime and subcontracting goals and offers the veterans guidance on sole-source and set-aside procurement opportunities. More information is at: <http://www.sba.gov/GC/>.
- **8(a) Business Development Program.** Small companies owned and operated by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals may be eligible for this program. Certified 8(a) businesses receive training and business-development support along with federal contracting opportunities.
- **Small Disadvantaged Business Certification.** SDB certification by the SBA ensures that small businesses owned and controlled by socially and economically

disadvantaged individuals meet SDB eligibility criteria. Certification may qualify these businesses for price evaluation credit on federal contracts.

- **HUBZone Empowerment Contracting Program.** This program encourages economic development in historically underutilized business zones through the use of federal contract preferences for eligible firms. HUBZones are distressed communities with low income and high unemployment. More information is at: <https://eweb1.sba.gov/hubzone/internet/>.
- **Federal Procurement Assistance.** A Procurement Center Representative helps small businesses obtain federal contracts through the Prime Contracts and Subcontracts programs. The Certificate of Competency program helps small businesses in the appeal process to low-bidding firms that have been denied contracts for a perceived inability to perform satisfactorily. Find more information at: <http://www.sba.gov/businessop/programs/pcr.html>.

Advocacy

- **Office of Advocacy.** The SBA's Office of Advocacy is an independent voice for small business within the federal government. The office advances the views, concerns, and interests of small business before Congress, the White House, federal agencies, federal courts and state policy makers. Economic research, policy analyses, and small business outreach help identify issues of concern. More information is available at: www.sba.gov/advo/.

Regulatory Fairness

- **National Ombudsman.** This office assists small businesses with unfair and excessive federal regulatory enforcement, such as repetitive audits or investigations, excessive fines, penalties, retaliation or other unfair regulatory enforcement action by a federal agency. The Ombudsman coordinates 10 regional Small Business Regulatory Fairness Boards which meet regularly to receive comments about federal regulations affecting small businesses. More information is at: <http://www.sba.gov/ombudsman/> or by calling 1-888-REG-FAIR.

SBA on the Internet

- SBA Web page: www.sba.gov. This Web site provides detailed information on all SBA programs and services for business start-up, planning and development.
- Online Women's Business Center: www.onlinewbc.gov. This site is full of great information for starting and growing your business and has an interactive business plan site.
- Business.Gov. www.business.gov. This site provides state-by-state legal and regulatory information for small businesses. Business tax information and forms are also available.

For more information:

SBA offices are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam. For the office nearest you, look under "U.S. Government" in your phone directory or check the SBA online at www.sba.gov.

