

An official publication of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization

# @VAVetBiz News

*Your Connection To VA OSDBU News, Information, And Resources*

# FINDING THE NEW NORMAL

Keeping Your Doors Open When The World Pauses...

**SPRING 2020**

# Letter From the Executive Director



In response to this global health crisis, I anticipated that there would likely be some impact to the small business world, and certainly those small businesses who currently hope to support the VA. I knew that there would be a call for action and an added degree of engagement from our office to the small business community. I also knew we would need to bridge information back to our leadership within the VA so that they could understand that OSDBU was proactively prepared to do their part in response to the pandemic.

In taking the steps to respond to COVID-19, we continue to be fully compliant with VetsFirst; we did not take any shortcuts and the integrity of our program remains intact. Prior to the pandemic, we worked hard to ensure that the processing timelines were sitting at an average of 15 days, as opposed to the allotted 90 days, eliminating any backlogs. This allowed us to be much more responsive to change, and we were able to re-allocate resources at OSDBU to improve the viability of small businesses who are working tirelessly to remain financially-solvent during these times.

Even in the face of adversity, there are still positive aspects that emerge, and one of which is that when the call came, our community was ready. I feel immense pride in our small business communities, as we all learn about the impacts of the virus, what I witnessed and experienced firsthand was a willingness of the small business community to step forward and say, 'I want to help.' The human factor affects us all. People are trying to take care of their families while trying to take care of their own business needs, but despite this, the messages

Continued on Page 9 "Executive Director"

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### VIRTUAL RESOURCES

The U.S. SBA has several resources for veteran entrepreneurs.

**Page 03**

### LAUNCHING FORWARD

Venus Quates traded in her uniform and achieved her goals as a CEO.

**Page 05**

### OSDBU TRANSFORMATION TO MEET COVID CHALLENGES

A look at how OSDBU staff rapidly adapted new daily business practices despite COVID-19 challenges.

**Page 08**

### WOMEN MAKING IT WORK

Women are stepping up to the plate and becoming the small business standard

**Page 11**

### MAKING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Networking in a post COVID-19 business environment, and navigating the challenges associated.

**Page 13**

## Connect & Engage With @VAVetBiz



# VIRTUAL RESOURCES FOR VETERAN ENTREPRENEURS



Coronavirus (COVID-19) has had a widespread impact on our nation's small businesses – including the 2.5 million veteran-owned small businesses across the country. Organizations nationwide have been pivoting to provide virtual resources, guidance, and support for small business owners over the last few months. And now, more than ever, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is dedicated to finding new ways to help veteran entrepreneurs navigate these unprecedented times, including collaborating with organizations who uphold the same mission.

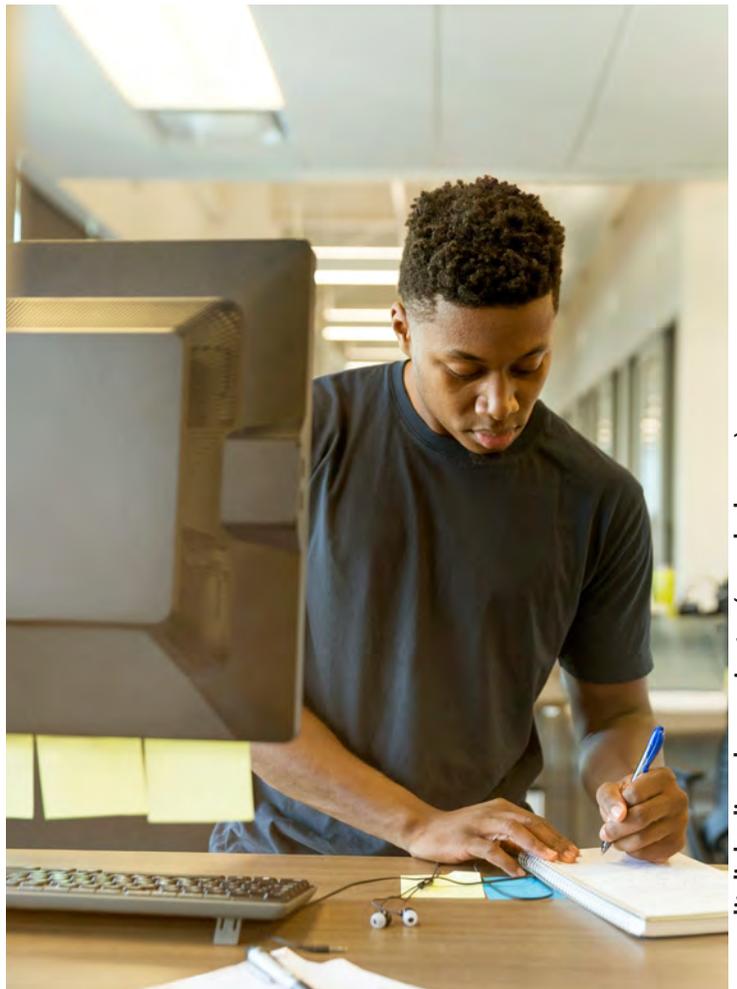
SBA's Office of Veterans Business Development (OVBD) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) have worked together closely to empower the veteran-owned small business community, and the pandemic presented a new opportunity to connect with our shared audiences. We recently teamed up to host a three-part webinar series to discuss the COVID-19 disaster relief options and lifelines that are available for veteran entrepreneurs during this time. Subject matter experts from both sides joined forces to provide virtual "Straight Talk – Straight Answer" sessions on topics including the CARES Act, Paycheck Protection Program, Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program, and general economic resources for veteran small business owners. Even in the midst of the pandemic, SBA OVBD and VA OSDBU continue to work together to advocate for the communities we serve.

Are you a veteran small business owner looking for virtual support? Here are three ways you can find it through the SBA, VA OSDBU, and other resource partners.

## 1. Take advantage of online resources for veteran entrepreneurs

SBA, VA OSDBU, and other organizations have a number of online resources to support veteran small business owners, especially during unpredictable times like these. Check out:

- [SBA local assistance for veteran-owned small businesses](#)
- [SBA COVID-19 disaster relief options for small business owners](#)
- [VA OSDBU state-by-state COVID-19 resources for veterans](#)
- [Federal resources for small businesses affected by COVID-19](#)



Continued on Page 4 "Virtual Resources"

image credit: linkedin sales navigator (unsplash.com)

## VIRTUAL RESOURCES CONTINUED....

Remember – as a veteran, you’re well-equipped with the skills necessary to adapt and stay resilient just like you did in the military. But you’re not alone, and we’re here to help you and your small business weather the pandemic.

### 2. Connect with your local Veterans Business Outreach Center

SBA’s Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOC) are your one-stop shop for counseling and mentorship, access to capital resources, entrepreneurial workshops, and much more. In fact, VBOC services are now available either online or over the phone. If you’re interested in

connecting with a VBOC, we encourage you to reach out to one of our 22 centers across the country to learn more about what your virtual options are. [Find a VBOC near you.](#)

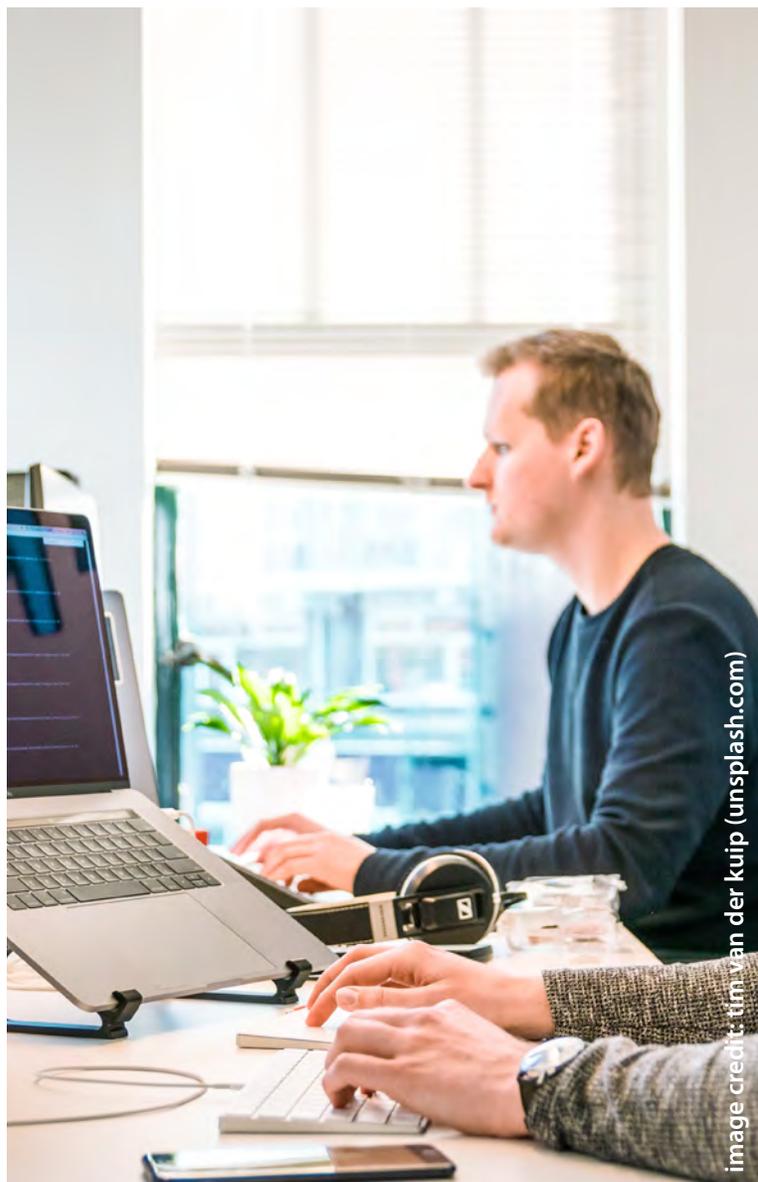
### 3. Explore virtual entrepreneurship training programs for veterans

Did you know that many of the SBA’s entrepreneurship programs are now being offered in a virtual setting? It’s true, and this includes our flagship entrepreneurial education and training program, Boots to Business. Boots to Business is now available in a real-time virtual format for transitioning service members, veterans, and military spouses. Learn more about Boots to Business and how this course can help you navigate the world of small business ownership.

If you’re looking for additional business training and workshops, the SBA’s entrepreneurship training programs for women veterans, service-disabled veterans, and veterans interested in federal procurement are also transitioning to online environments. Learn more about these programs and their current availability.

You can also check out VA OSDDBU’s education and training resources for veteran entrepreneurs who are doing business within the federal and commercial marketplaces.

For more information on resources for veteran entrepreneurs, visit the U.S. Small Business Administration homepage: [www.sba.gov/ovbd](http://www.sba.gov/ovbd) or the VA OSDDBU homepage: [www.va.gov/osdbu](http://www.va.gov/osdbu).



**LET US  
HEAR  
from  
YOU!**

# LAUNCH-ing Forward

Operating a successful minority, woman, and service-disabled veteran-owned Information Technology business in Western New York is no small feat. It demands resiliency, perseverance and dedication. Take for instance, Venus Quates, President & CEO of LAUNCHTECH, who has propelled herself into a competitive career that demands excellence and perfection, where a business can be commended and known for more than their socio-economic statuses.

From an early age, Venus had an entrepreneurial spirit. "I was the type of kid who, instead of asking for sneakers or toys, asked my mom to buy a roll of raffle tickets. I would then sell the raffle tickets at church, and the prize would be whatever I had made at home." Growing up, she received tremendous support from her mother, who encouraged her to know her worth and never to limit herself, as well as her grandparents, who she recalls telling her to "shoot for the moon—even if you miss, you'll land among the stars."

And shoot for the moon she did. Not afraid to take a risk, Quates enlisted in the Air Force in 1997, without her mother's prior knowledge. Military life was not foreign to her family, as her father, grandfather, uncles, and cousins had all served. Quates served in a number of roles, initially as an Information Manager, before she found her home supporting the Help Desk and Small Computers. A change which she considered "a blessing, because it was where I wanted to be in the first place."

Venus separated from the military in 2001 to take a position with General Dynamics in England. Wanting to learn all that she could, she chased after every opportunity to succeed in her career. "When the companies I worked for wouldn't pay for my



training—I paid for it myself. I would research the hottest certifications for the coming year and take vacation days to go to the pre-requisite training or to take certification exams. When I want to learn something, I completely immerse myself in it," she says.

Six years ago, Venus moved to Buffalo, NY to be closer to her family and to take care of her father, a Navy Veteran who was recently diagnosed with COVID-19. She took a substantial pay cut and accepted a position with a company that relocated her to the area. Her tenure at that tech company was the driving force in her wanting to start her own tech company. "I was the only black woman in the building that worked in technology.

Despite being hired in a senior position, I was left in a cubicle and limited access to systems for months." It was the first time in her 20-year career that she felt out of place and that she was being treated differently due to her gender and race. "You can either spend time complaining or use it to take action. I decided on the latter..."

Venus founded LAUNCHTECH in February of 2016. One area of her company's focus is identifying how the application of emerging technologies or the utilization of established technologies in new ways, can enhance the way their Federal and Commercial customers do business. The word "launch" in her company's name has a special meaning to Venus, "it's a nod to my Air Force career—it's a powerful word that means "to set in motion". It also signifies our mission to propel our customers forward and upward."

In addition to the grit and determination she learned from the military, Venus also learned about leadership, responsibility, the importance of "Service before Self" and keeping the "Mission First." She states, "It's easy to be consumed by the fires around us—but we at LAUNCHTECH keep our eyes ahead on the mission. If there are stumbling blocks or roadblocks along the way, we act accordingly, pivoting when necessary but staying focused and moving forward."

Continued on Page 6 "LAUNCHTECH"

# LAUNCH*Tech*

# LAUNCHTECH Continued...



## LAUNCHTech

In 2019, Venus was one of 29 Women Veteran Business Owners chosen to be a part of the first Women Veteran-Owned Business Cohort started by OSDBU and spearheaded by Michelle “G-I” Gardner-Ince. Participation in the Cohort offered these female business owners access to training and opportunities to pitch their services to large prime contractors and decision-makers throughout the VA and other Federal agencies. As a result of this program, LAUNCHTECH gained a trusted partnership with Verizon, who they will be

**“Be forward-thinking while you can’t control what’s going on right now, you can control how you respond to and bounce back from this.”**

– Venus Quates, President & CEO, LAUNCHTECH

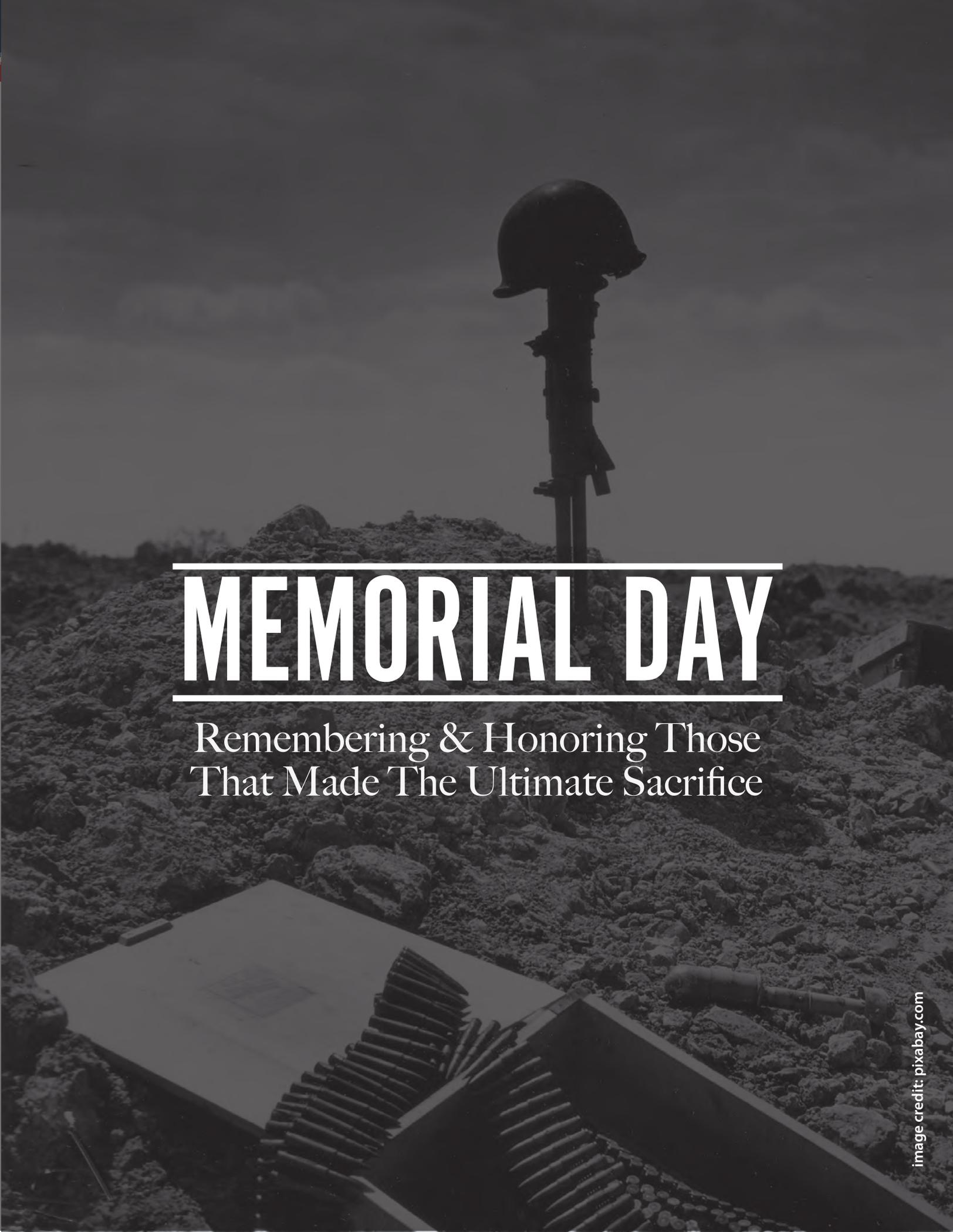
supporting on the VA’s Enterprise Infrastructure Services (EIS) and WITS vehicles, as well as telehealth and other groundbreaking initiatives. LAUNCHTECH has also supported M&T Bank, the Defense Health Agency, Department of Homeland Security, DoD, and the State of New York on various healthcare and technology contracts.

In March of this year, LAUNCHTECH was awarded a software development contract where they supported the development of a secure and HIPAA-compliant CRM system. This system serves as a central location for small healthcare organizations across the state of New York to share client and

patient information, resources, and referrals. Although the contract was initially intended to serve organizations prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it proves to be an asset amid catastrophic events and for day-to-day patient and client care.

Regardless of what life throws at you, Venus reiterates the importance of remaining resilient. “Two years ago, I was broke and broken, blindsided by a miscarriage, separation, and divorce. In the middle of the chaos, I was running a business. One year later, LAUNCHTECH became a multi-million-dollar company. I’ve already hit rock bottom and experienced so much loss, so pandemics, threats of recession, and the inevitable closed doors that I face daily as a business owner can’t knock me down. It only makes me work harder. I live with the understanding that fear cripples you, but faith supports you.” During these unprecedented times, Venus advises other business owners to “be forward-thinking—while you can’t control what’s going on right now you can control how you respond to and bounce back from this.”

LAUNCHTECH is a Service-Disabled Veteran, Minority, and Woman-owned company that provides Information Technology services, support, and resale as well as Professional Services solutions to government and commercial customers. The company holds several certifications, first, of course, being a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB). They are an SBA certified 8(a), HUBZone, and Economically Disadvantaged Woman-Owned Small-business (EDWOSB). LAUNCHTECH also holds various Minority, Woman, and Veteran-Owned business certifications in the State of New York.

A black and white photograph of a military helmet on a post in a trench, with a typewriter in the foreground. The helmet is mounted on a tall, thin post. The background shows a trench with a pile of earth. The foreground shows a typewriter with its keys visible. The overall tone is somber and reflective.

# MEMORIAL DAY

Remembering & Honoring Those  
That Made The Ultimate Sacrifice

# OSDBU Operations Quickly Transitions to Meet COVID-19 Challenges



Sharon G. Ridley  
Deputy Executive  
Director  
Office of Small &  
Disadvantaged  
Business Utilization

During these unprecedented times, VA's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) continues to show its unparalleled commitment to Veterans, Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs), and other partners. While the country was closing to protect its citizens from the dangers of COVID-19, I moved quickly to ensure operations would continue. Tough decisions were made, processes were streamlined, and employees answered the call.

COVID-19 has reshaped the way the world does business and VA OSDBU has risen to the occasion through active engagement with other VA contracting stakeholders to ensure VOSBs are being considered for emerging opportunities. In the coming articles you will read about how I maintained the commitment to customer service, outreach, verification, and engagement (COVE) and masterfully executed Veteran-centric initiatives.

## Transformations occurred as we:

1. Posted special notification banners on the [VetBiz](#) Portal with direct access to the Centers for Disease Control.
2. Created a [state-specific resource page](#) on OSDBU's website with COVID-19 disaster assistance information on loans, grants, financial resources, and additional information; sent this information directly to over 14,000 small businesses listed in the Vendor Information Pages.
3. Published urgent COVID-19 market research Sources Sought Notices to the [Beta.SAM](#) Contract Opportunities portal in coordination with VHA.
4. Facilitated partnerships between Women Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (WVOSBs) and large or non-Veteran businesses for critical personal protective equipment and medical supplies.
5. Conducted a popular [three-part webinar series](#) with the Small Business Administration (SBA) on economic resources for COVID-19.
6. Extended verification expiration dates by 60 days to accommodate small businesses with verifications expiring during the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. Processed verifications expeditiously, with an average completion time of 38 days across all categories.
8. Accepted signed statements instead of official bank signature cards when Veteran applicants had difficulty obtaining them during the pandemic.
9. Notified 1,000+ verified VOSBs/Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses of opportunities to support COVID-19 critical procurements in coordination with VHA.
10. Provided opportunities for small businesses to conduct networking sessions with Procurement Decision Makers (PDMs). OSDBU will conduct [10 more virtual business opportunity sessions](#) with PDMs from VA, industry, and other government agencies.

At the end of the day, OSDBU's goal remains the same: to make sure the customer service needs of Veterans, VOSBs, and other partners are addressed accurately and timely. In order to meet this goal, we have joined in the fight against the global pandemic by creating innovative solutions that build resilience and inspire hope. I have

been amazed at the tremendous care and commitment I have witnessed as the mission is carried out.

Stay safe and strong, because success depends on all of us. The VA needs you and your special expertise as we all transform to a new normal.

# Executive Director Continued...

that I received, without exception were, "What can I do for Veterans?" This came in the form of offers to make their products available, inquiries to understand our requirements and needs, and to be put into touch with the right person. Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs) and Veteran Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs) showed a readiness to stand with VA, to stand with OSDDBU, and to help meet our mission.

Small businesses are not in it alone. An expression I feel is best used during this time is: "One Team, One Fight." We are up against an invisible enemy with COVID-19. I want to encourage you to remain resilient and know you are not in this alone. We're looking to march forward shoulder to shoulder with our small business community, ensuring that if they take care of their business, we'll take care of them through the efforts of OSDDBU.

Sincerely,  
Ruby B. Harvey  
Executive Director

Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization



## VETERANS HELPING VETERANS

At VA OSDDBU, we believe that Veterans are the cornerstones and the backbones of our communities. We also know that Veterans have a special bond. Regardless of how long someone served, Veterans become life-long members of a community that strive to support one another, regardless of circumstance. Comradery between Veterans aids in making connections, working together and striving for excellence.

OSDDBU is proud to announce our "Veterans Helping Veterans" initiative, which will highlight Veteran-Owned businesses that are doing their part to give back to the Veteran community.

Veterans want to help other Veterans. This can be through services that your business offers, hiring practices or giving back to the community ranging from working with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), other federal agencies, commercial industry, as well as proceeds benefiting Veteran-serving non-profit organizations.

If your business is helping other Veterans, or if you know a Veteran-Owned business that you would like to nominate for a spotlight in our "Veterans Helping Veterans" initiative for future publications or communications, submit their information here:

[OSDBUSTRATCOMM@va.gov](mailto:OSDBUSTRATCOMM@va.gov).

image credit: pixabay.com



# Persevering Through A Pandemic

In the pre-award phase, the Program Support Team (PST) supports Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSB) with market research assistance, as well as the contracting and procurement process. The OSDBU PST serves as a gobetween for companies and federal agencies, bridging the gap between them. PST ensures that when a contract is awarded, it is without issue and all potential problems have already been addressed.

In a gatekeeper role, PST has worked tirelessly to protect both the company and the US government, eliminating the risks for scams and favoritism. PST will thoroughly examine a company's capability statement, screening them for legitimacy and making recommendations to the government based on the findings of their defined market research. Especially in this time of limited resources, it is critical to match the right organizations together.

Throughout this pandemic, there was an influx in COVID-19 related procurement opportunities for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses.

Many Veteran-Owned Small Businesses are looking for ways to give back to the community, and PST is prepared to assist them in enhancing their capability statements to meet specific COVID-19 requirements identified in the government's Request for Information (RFI). PST has been incredibly pro-active in helping our VOSBs and SDVOSBs, building

rapport between all the different organizations and contracting officers and the Small Business Liaisons. The team has compiled some key advice to guide VOSBs on the path to success.

**Read the VA OSDBU Reference Guide:** Doing Business with VA. This comprehensive reference guide is a critical starting point for businesses to get an idea of what different organizations are buying, as well as the program requirements.

**Do your homework.** It's advantageous for VOSBs to ensure there is interest and need in VA for their services or product offerings. While VOSBs may be given preference, a company's capabilities still must align with what VA is seeking.

**Perform market research.** Utilize all the tools available at your disposal. Electronic Request for Information (eRFI), FedMine, beta.SAM, and internet searches are critical tools to identify key players and competitors within your industry.

**Take advantage of VA OSDBU webinars.** Gain the skills that you need to be successful. Obtain information from your industry, learn how to maximize networking opportunities to form teams, and become experts in market research.

**Respond to RFIs and Sources-Sought notices.** If you don't respond to RFI's, we might not know you are out there. PST recommends that you be honest, sincere, and smart when applying for RFIs.

Be sure to watch RFIs posted on beta. SAM, it is likely that there will be a solicitation in six months.

**Be ready to respond to the 'Why?' and the 'How?'** If you don't respond to the questions, PST will have trouble setting something aside and making the case for your business. Invest the time in developing a carefully crafted capability statement, demonstrating how you can deliver.

**Get in touch with Small Business Liaisons (SBL) in your field.** They know more about the requirements and can guide you. Learn who is going to be buying your products or who set the requirements. They will help you to align your capabilities with a federal agency.

**See what DAP events are taking place and reach out.** We strongly recommend that you attend OSDBU Direct Access Program (DAP) events to network, learn to be procurement-ready, and get the opportunity to interact with current procurement decision makers.



image used with permission from sba.gov



# Women Making It Work

According to the Vendor Information Portal, about 9%, or 1,300 businesses, are women-owned, identifying them as the fastest growing demographic for VA. Learning this, it only seemed logical that OSDBU pursue a Women Veteran-Owned Small Business (WVOSB) Initiative, with a focus on providing information, access, opportunity and community to WVOSBs.

This year, a cohort of 29 women were exposed to decision makers. Taught to pitch their stories, how to perform market research, and learned how to perform business operations such as hiring, staffing, insurance, and benefits. These women were able to expand their skill sets while building relationships with organizations that share their same mission and initiatives.

The WVOSB group that participated in the inaugural cohort gained invaluable practical applications, not just reiterations from a textbook. Many of the attendees are doing phenomenal work in the face of this pandemic, especially regarding information technology, ensuring that systems remain up, online and functional.

Michelle Gardner-Ince, Director of Program Development, expressed that in these trying times, she sees so much character in women business owners; they are diligent, focused, and busier than they've ever been. In times of crisis, teammates and connections are critical, and it's imperative that they fit in with your business. Ms. Gardner-Ince advises WVOSBs to take an approach of: Solve a problem, Address issues, and Meet a need. If a connection of yours has a need, your company may not be the one to solve that need, but you can call upon your own network of connections to assist and resolve it.

# Verification is Virus-Proof

## HAVE YOU USED THE CALL CENTER?

If you're experiencing an issue or you need a question answered, we're here to help! The OSDBU Call Center is available from 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. EST to answer your questions or concerns. The call center can be reached at **1-866-584-2344.**

We pride ourselves on getting you the answers you need, and will be sure to connect you to the proper channels.

The Center for Verification and Evaluation (CVE) has been working tirelessly to aid businesses in obtaining, or maintaining, their Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB) accreditation, even in the face of adversity. "We want to assure businesses that we are still here, and we are ready to help," said John Perkins, Acting Director, OSDBU Center for Verification and Evaluation (CVE).

While the current state of the country may have some businesses hesitant or uncertain, CVE has made all

reasonable accommodations possible—to include:

- Authorized Veteran applicants to provide signed statements for the record in lieu of requiring official bank signature cards
- Authorized Veteran applicants to provide alternative documentation in lieu of missing tax documents due to the IRS having a reduced capacity to respond
- Ensured all Veteran document request timelines are within the process and will be given additional leeway during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even in the face of a pandemic, CVE has seen little impact on the time it takes to process your verification documents. A business can expect to receive their verification in as little as 15 calendar days from submission, with the average time to complete the entire process lasting around 37 calendar days. These numbers fall far below the allowed 90-day completion timeline, showing that even in the face of COVID 19 disruptions, CVE is still going strong and is ready to support the needs of the OSDBU community.

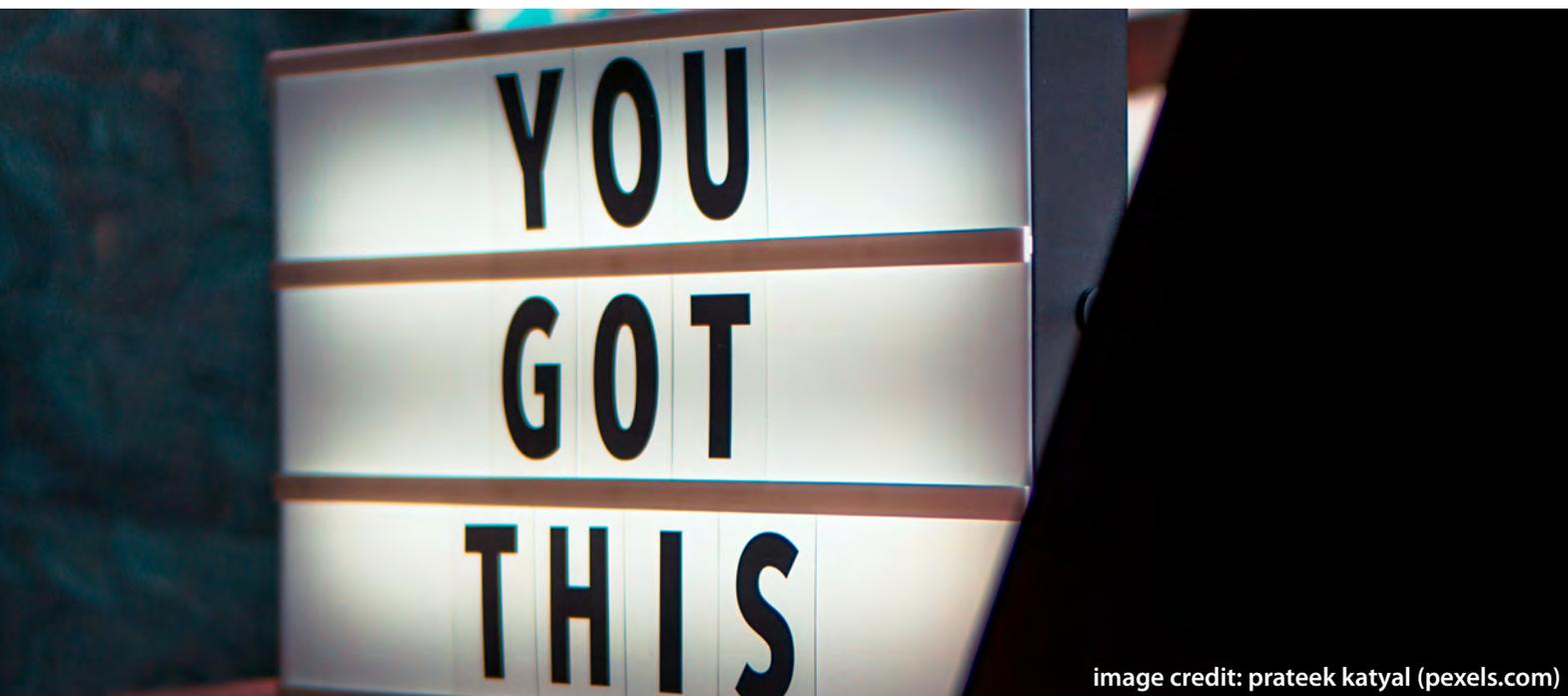


image credit: prateek katyal (pexels.com)

# Make Meaningful Connections

If you own a business, it's always in your best interest to branch out and explore new opportunities to grow. Through the Direct Access Program (DAP), you have the opportunity to attend events, meet potential teaming partners, interact with senior leadership, and network with other organizations based on their capabilities or North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes.

While the pandemic may limit the in-person opportunities available, OSDBU is working to accommodate, utilizing technology and automation. So far no major events have been affected due to the pandemic, and DAP has been able to turn on a dime, mitigating risks by working in close collaboration with OSDBU and large businesses by hosting events in a virtual context.

Encompassing all recommended guidelines, DAP continues to host events to strengthen connections in the small business community. While some businesses may shy away from attending DAP-hosted virtual events, we are here to address your concerns.

## **"Will it still be impactful even if it's online?"**

DAP utilizes software and online resources to host informative webinars for business owners and

leadership to attend. These webinars are still interactive and will allow attendees to ask questions, and network with one another, making connections without leaving their homes.

## **"How many people usually attend these events, anyway?"**

DAP events are often widely attended, and some even fill up to capacity with businesses anxiously waiting for the opportunity to be in front of these key decision makers. Procurement Decision Makers (PDM) who attend often provide one-on-one advice and feedback, potentially providing the attendee with a life-changing business opportunity.

## **"What should I expect from a DAP event?"**

These events encompass a variety of relevant opportunities, and can the form of Business Opportunity Sessions (BOS), Networking Roundtables (NRT), town halls and education sessions. These events can open doors to subcontracting and procurement opportunities, even in the face of a pandemic.

## **"I'm worried about the registration fee."**

We pride ourselves in providing programs that deliver immense value to the OSDBU community.

DAP seeks out large businesses and key leadership personnel and provides small businesses with the opportunity to get once-in-a-lifetime face to face connections and instantaneous feedback. While most events do not have a fee, we try to keep registration fees as affordable to businesses as possible. To find out more about DAP and how it plays a role in ensuring programs, services and support resources visit their webpage: [www.va.gov/osdbu/outreach/dap](http://www.va.gov/osdbu/outreach/dap).



#VeteransHelpingVeterans

# MAKE EVERY CONNECTION COUNT



image source: va.gov

When one thinks of outreach, one commonly thinks of interacting with the greater community, through events, communication and involvement. In these times, it's a bit harder to do so from six feet (or more) apart. Our department of Strategic Outreach and Communications (SOC) has been working tirelessly to continue to build and maintain connections with Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSB), regardless of their situation.

The SOC team is OSDBU's most outward facing department and is commonly the first encounter that a VOSB has with us. We advocate for programs, participate in outreach events, educate and inform Veterans as well as provide resources OSDBU has to assist them. The team takes a "boots on the ground" approach as much as possible, allowing us the opportunity to be transparent and open with VOSBs by telling them what they need to hear and advising them on how to ask the right questions. Outreach events present an opportunity for OSDBU to engage with the VOSB community and others about the Vet First Program. SOC participates in approximately 50 outreach engagements a year to promote the programs that OSDBU offers, as well as advocate for the VOSB community.

SOC also offers an extensive education and training program. Through this nationwide program, VOSBs gain access to acquisition materials and lessons, allowing them to become procurement ready. This allows them

the opportunity to build relationships with other VOSBs and vendors, potentially leading to contracting opportunities with VA, other federal agencies, and commercial partners. While these may not be able to occur in a physical environment, SOC has been able to adapt to the circumstances by offering training online as recorded webinars, granting access to more business owners and allowing them to continue to form invaluable connections.

Now more than ever, it is critical to communicate clearly and effectively through a digital context. SOC takes the messages from all areas of OSDBU and crafts external communications that convey critical information to VOSBs. The Strategic Outreach and Communications team was instrumental in putting together a message to distribute to VOSBs requesting assistance in meeting the demand for PPE supplies. The VOSB community answered the call. SOC received emails from hundreds of businesses a day, all wanting to assist VA in fulfilling the need, and wanting to show their support for other Veterans.

In these unprecedented times, SOC is making sure that every connection counts. Be sure to keep in touch with the OSDBU community. [Click here](#) to subscribe to our email updates.

# Upcoming Events

Our events can help you build and grow your small business.

Gain quick access to the VA OSDBU Events Calendar at [www.va.gov/osdbu/calendar.asp](http://www.va.gov/osdbu/calendar.asp).

## Outreach & Procurement

### VA Direct Access Program - Magellan Transport Logistics

Virtual Information Session  
June 18, 2020 1:30 PM - 3:30 PM (EDT)  
[Event Link](#)

### Vets First Verification Program Webinars and Town Halls

#### Pre-Application Webinar and Town Hall

June 5, 2020 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (EDT)  
Virtual (GoTo Meeting)  
[Event Link](#)

#### Pre-Application Webinar and Town Hall

June 19, 2020 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (EDT)  
Virtual (GoTo Meeting)  
[Event Link](#)

For more information about the Vets First Verification Program Webinars and Town Halls, [Click Here](#).

MEET OUR TEAM



**Chanel Bankston-Carter**  
Director  
Strategic Outreach & Communications (SOC)



**Cynthia Mason-Posey**  
Deputy Director  
Strategic Outreach & Communications (SOC)



**DeLano McVay**  
Federal Team Lead,  
Education & Training



**Hollie Montgomery**  
Federal Team Lead,  
Outreach



**Rob Fryson**  
Program Manager



**Megan Pfister**  
Task Lead



**Victoria Sedlak**  
Technical Writer



**Dagmawi Kassahun**  
Web Developer



**Alexis Harris**  
Social Media Specialist



**Michael Sackett**  
Graphic Designer