

Small Business Webinar Series  
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>> Kelly: We'd like to thank you all for joining us for this resources for veteran-owned business and entrepreneurs today. We are just going to wait another minute. People are coming in at a fast rate, so we want to respect them and allow them to get into their seats. So bear with us for a minute. I'm going to post this while we're waiting for people to join us.

This is our accommodations notice for people who are hard of hearing. If this is of interest to you, the link to use this service is in the chat. You can copy it from the chat and paste it into your browser to access the service. I'll leave those instructions there for you to look at if you need to use this service. I'll also mention that we have a transcript for this event and that will be available from our website probably 24 hours, within 48 hours of the event, you can access the transcript through the link at the bottom of the slide there.

Again, anyone attending this event will receive a link in an email to this slide deck, so you can look at all of this again later. Any contact information, any panelists, any organizations or resources mentioned in this event will be in the slide deck, and you can access it later in your own good time, in your own home. So I'm just going to leave this here for a moment.

And so we have quite a number of people here, and we are a minute into our event. And so I'm going to now hand the reins to our executive director, of the economic development and tourism team at the office of the governor. Over to you, Adriana.

>> Adriana: Thank you so much, Kelly. Good afternoon, everybody, and thank you for joining us today. I'm Adriana Cruz, Executive Director in the Office of Governor Greg Abbot. On behalf of the entire team at the Economic Development and Tourism Office, thank you for joining us for our 12th Governor's Small Business Webinar, which we are holding during National Small Business Week.

Our small business team has been putting together these small business webinars since mid-April, and we're always changing things

up and looking for topics that will be of interest to our small business owners. Today we're excited to be featuring programs and resources for veteran-owned small businesses. And it's literally the day after the Small Business Administration named a Texas veteran as the 2020 Small Business Person of the Year, a great example of the success that veteran entrepreneurs can achieve.

In fact, Texas is consistently ranked as the best state to start a business. And Texas also leads the nation for the number of jobs created by veteran women-owned small businesses, a great testament to the hard work and perseverance of our veteran entrepreneurs. Our goal with these webinars is to provide you information and connect you with resources that will help you find success on your entrepreneurial journey.

Texas small businesses are the backbone of the Texas economy, and I thank you for everything that you do every day to keep our economy going, and also want to thank you for your service to our country. We know that Texas small businesses are continuing to face tremendous challenges, but Texans are resilient, and we can overcome any obstacle. I want to thank those of you who have joined us for several of these webinars.

Please keep giving us your feedback, as we've always trying to improve and find new topics that are going to be helpful to you. And now it's my honor to introduce our first speaker, Chip Osborne, Director of Research Management at the Texas Veterans Commission. Chip.

>> Chip: Thank you, Ms. Cruz. First of all, you know, folks, good afternoon. Again, I am Chip Osborne, Division Director for Resource Management at the Texas Veterans Commission. And again, I've got to thank Ms. Cruz, the executive director, and Jarvis from the Office of the Governor for a second invite, because I did this last year out in El Paso. I also need to especially thank all of our partners for helping to host this workshop today. This is a tremendous effort.

The last count I heard, we have approximately 617 participants today. And that's a phenomenal number, so, congratulations to all. The overall mission of the Texas Veterans Commission is to advocate for and provide superior services to veterans that have significantly -- that will improve their quality of life for all Texas veterans, their families, and their survivors.

Our agency has nine programs to assist veterans and their families with things such as employment, VA claims, healthcare advocacy, mental health, education, outreach, women veterans, the funds from veterans assistance, which is to give to nonprofits and units of local government, funds that actually support veterans as well. And finally, we have our veteran entrepreneur program.

As a veteran and an entrepreneur myself, I understand the challenges veterans face in starting and growing their business. Let

me reflect with you. Back in 2010 and '11, I was deployed over in Iraq. I did 25 years of active duty. I knew that I was coming at the end of my career. And I wanted to do something unique and different, so I remember calling my wife when I was overseas. And I told her, look, I think I want to do a small coffee shop and just sell coffee, flip-flops, and cigars.

She quickly responded back to me saying, no. You need to go back and get a full-time job. And then if you want to do something on the side, look at that. So I thought about that. And, you know, to make a long story short, my brother-in-law introduced me to one of his high school friends, Mr. Mark. And you can tell by my voice, I'm not a native Texan. I'm originally from South Carolina.

And there's a big difference if you're born and raised in South Carolina and you come to Texas. When I first moved to Texas, and I've lived in Texas twice now. So when I first moved to Texas back in the early '80s, I asked for this meeting that a lot of people didn't know about, a meat called pulled pork. Every time they would say, son, listen, this is Texas. There's brisket, chicken, and sausage. What part of that do you not understand? We don't have pulled pork.

Going full circle, in the latter part of the '90s is where pork really started taking off here in Texas. And now today there are a lot of restaurants that actually have the short pork ribs, or they are now actually offering pork sandwiches. So, the buddy of mine had a little place called Sugar Shack. He brought me on basically not for my knowledge of cooking pulled pork, because Mark is a chef. He brought me on to help with finances.

And so that's how I started and got enrolled with working with Mark Avalos. We changed the name of Sugar Shack to Slab Barbecue and Beer. We have the north location which was our first location that we stood up in August of 2014. And, you know, we only anticipated maybe in sales about \$750,000. So, guys, in our first full year of 12 months of doing the barbecue, we didn't sell \$750,000 of barbecue.

Instead, we sold \$1.2 million worth of pork barbecue to Texans. And I mean, it was phenomenal. From that point forward, we knew that we had something. So we needed, you know, to bring in other investors and partners to really help solidify our approach, because, see, guys, when we first started, we were in a small trailer on the west side of the UT campus.

It went to a food truck, and finally we now have two brick and mortars, the north and south locations. So, from there, you know, it's just been a great blessing. We have been featured on Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives, better known as triple D, Man vs. Food, and Food Paradise on the Food Channel Network. From that, we have two sauces that we have bottled, backyard red and our gold rush sauce.

So, it's been a real blessing. You know, I've got to give special thanks to my business partners, because it's a great team. And that's Mark Avalos, Rafael, and Johnny Smith IV. Two of us happen to be combat

veterans. And there's something to be said about being a veteran that makes a good entrepreneur. Why? Because you have a drive. You have a drive to make sure things are done right.

You have a drive to learn. You're a constant learner. And that's what helps. Additionally, you know, I've also ventured in -- and I just helped with another business partner as well for another side venture with phones, which we just stood up September 17th of 2020, just now. And that's with Adam and Brad Head. And we're providing phone service -- automated phone services.

That's what's so unique about being, you know, a veteran, is you're always looking, you know, how to improve things. And that leads me to why I want to steer you to the TVC and our veteran entrepreneurship program, because it's state and it's local. Our VEP program, you know, provides assistance not only with the startup, but also the growing of your business. And what we do is we help make sure that you have the basic developmental business skills where it prepares you to potentially, you know, reach out and secure that capital investment dollars that you may need, or to bring in other investors.

We foster and promote veteran entrepreneurship by connecting them with direct support. Remember, our team is also constantly monitoring the Texas market and the landscape out there, because it is ever-changing, especially now since we've experienced the pandemic. VEP has created perhaps to help the scope, to provide services to veterans. See, our business consultants, you know, they collaborate with the federal programs, with the other state programs, local entities, and also with the private industries.

Why? We want to provide you the best guidance of being a great entrepreneur and a business owner. And how do we do that? The vehicles that we use is basically our conferences, seminars, and training workshops just like this one. So again, I just want to reiterate that I really want you to reach out to TVC to our veteran entrepreneurship program and allow them to assist you.

See, in 2020, VEP presided over 4,000 services to veteran business owners and entrepreneurs. That was 112% increase of services from FY2019. In 2012, the SBA Office of Advocacy reported that veteran-owned businesses represents 9.1% of all Texas businesses. And a most recent report in 2018, veteran-owned businesses in Texas have grown to represent almost 17% of all Texas firms, with over 5%, guys, being women-veteran owned.

And I would really love to see that number increase. Just how impactful are you guys? Let me tell you. Texas, our tax revenue from veteran-owned businesses in 2019 was \$9.7 million, even with an economy, instability that we're experiencing right now due to the pandemic, the veteran-owned businesses will surpass \$8 million in tax revenue.

For the most recent veterans needs assessment that our agency

did, we discovered that 14% expressed a need for more business startup assistance and training. And to address this need and extend assistance beyond the major metropolitan areas, program coordinators have actually turned around and developed virtual training for veteran entrepreneurs, as well as existing business owners who may need to pivot their business based on the new market demands out there.

Our website is [www.tvc.texas.gov](http://www.tvc.texas.gov). Let me say it again. [www.tvc.texas.gov](http://www.tvc.texas.gov). Or, simply call us as 512-463-0519. And let me say that number again for you. Area code 512-463-0519. I want to leave you with a few things before I get off, because you've got such a great panel and a wealth of knowledge. I really am looking forward to diving into that.

But number one, do what you have a passion and a love for. Hear me, do what you have a passion and a love for. Life is too short to be miserable in a job or a business that you don't like. Number two, remember to keep it real. Don't overinflate your expectations, because during the first five years, this is why most businesses fail, startups, because they overemphasize and they have this dream that's way beyond reality.

So keep it real. And lastly, be very conservative and flexible by your expectations of the unexpected. A good example, the pandemic. You know, can your business model adapt to the market and the environment changes? Think long term, not short term, okay? Again, guys, I just want to say a big thank you to all the veterans here today for your service to our country.

I wish all of you the best of luck on your road to a small business ownership in the great state of Texas. And again, guys, thank you for this opportunity. It's been my pleasure to be part of the group today. And thanks again. I'll give back the rest of my time. Thanks.

>> Thank you, Chip Osborne, for those really inspiring words and great advice, and thank you also to Adriana Cruz for her opening remarks. I'm Kelly, the Small Business Advocate, emceeding the first portion of this event. We have five fantastic panelists who are going to talk about resources for veterans. Each of them have a different subset. All of the information that they're going to speak about will be available on these slides and this recording, which will be available from YouTube.

You will receive an email with links to both of those things. Give us your full attention, and you'll be able to access all of this later. And so, our panelists today, we have two panelists from the Veteran Business Outreach Centers. We have Patrick, director of the VBOC in Arlington, and Juan Flores, Program Director at the VBOC in UT Rio Grande Valley.

We will talk to Maggie from the Texas Veteran Commission. And she's a Veteran Entrepreneur Business Consultant. We Have VR Small, CEO of the Veteran Women's Enterprise Center, and John, CEO of

Combined Arms. Each panelist will talk about their organizations and the resources that are available to veterans through those organizations. So, I'm going to kick off the questions with our two panelist from the VBOC.

First of all, Patrick Alcorn, thank you for joining us.

>> I'm excited to be here. Greetings, everyone.

>> I'm going to say to all of our audience, thank you for your service. Thank you from all of us. So, Patrick, my first question is everybody's favorite. Where can I get money to start my business, Patrick?

>> That's not just your favorite question, but Kelly, that is everyone's favorite question, and not just from my office at the VBOC, but for all of our SBA resource partners, the number one question that we get is where can I get money to start or grow my business. And the quick answer to that question is, from your customers.

Sell your product or service and reinvest the revenue back into your business. So, get your first source of funds directly from the customer by selling a product or service. However, we do understand if you need money because you have some initial cash flow concerns, or you need to purchase capital equipment, or maybe you have a long product development cycle and you need to produce the product before you can make your first sale.

There's several veteran-friendly sources for funding. The SBA has multiple loan programs, including a community advantage loan with access to capital up to \$1 million and terms as low as 3 to 5% for 25 years with little or no fees. There are community development companies, CDCs and community development financial intermediaries, CDFIs, that can provide micro-loans anywhere from \$500 to \$50,000.

And they'll even join your advisory team to support your business plan. And if your business involves solving a public problem that the government is interested in solving, such as new technology or maybe you're doing some research or alternative energy, or maybe you're informing and you're looking at feeding people in farming, you may be able to find a grant at grants.gov to support your business.

And finally, there are multiple veteran-friendly pitch competitions where you can get access to capital. But in all cases, make sure you have a solid business plan before you ask for money. So that's the quick answer to where you get money from.

>> Moderator: Thank you, Patrick. On the slide that we're showing, we have a number of different little brands there, the second half of the slide. Those are all programs that the VBOC runs. One may refer to those. You can see that information there. There are dates on some of them that are happening shortly. And Patrick, my second question is, what VA benefits are available to help people start businesses, help veterans start businesses?

>> Kelly, that's probably the number 2 question that we get. We get a phone call or email that says, what services do you provide?

And what's interesting is the question always comes in the way you asked it. They ask what VA benefits, or what can I use in order to help me start or grow my business. And the accurate answer to that question is, none, zero, zilch. VA benefits do not include small business support.

The SBA, or U.S. Small Business Administration, is your source for small business support. Your VA benefits include home loans, healthcare, education, employment readiness, disability compensation, pension, and retirement, not small business support. Now, there is a slight link between the voc rehab program that's part of the VA that links to the VA employment readiness program which will give you access to the SBA and all of those entrepreneur resources that come through the SBA.

But the quick answer, again, is your VA benefits do not help you with starting and growing a business. That comes from the U.S. small business administration. And as you'll learn through the rest of this call today, through your state agencies, particularly in our office, we run the business on the battlefield conference hosted every November. The week prior to Veterans day, November 2nd through 5th. This year's registration is free. You get to register for free for that event with great keynotes.

And even if you have some retail products that you want to sell, you can ask for a free exhibit booth to display and sell your products or services. And then coming up even faster than that, your business will never outgrow your thinking and your ability to lead it, to influence it. So we have our Live to Lead Program, where you have an opportunity to get leadership training and grow your leadership abilities to be able to run your company more effectively at Live to Lead, coming up on October 9th.

That is both a live event if you're in the DFW area at the University of Texas at Arlington, and it's free at that particular location, with social distance seating. Or it is a virtual event because it is actually a global event and we're doing that globally wide. So if you're interested in doing business with the VA, they have a verification process. Otherwise, going back to the quick answer, the SBA is your source for small business support.

>> Moderator: Great distinction, Patrick. Patrick is part of the VBOC at the University of Texas at Arlington. And those programs at the bottom of that slide are worth looking into after this event. And again, you'll have access to the slide deck. Thank you, Patrick. I have one question for Juan. You're welcome, Juan, thank you for joining us. Great. The question, Juan, what resources and service do you provide veteran business owners and new entrepreneurs?

>> Welcome, I'm very happy to be here. That's a great question. You often come across veterans that are not familiar with what resources are available to them, specifically those wanting to venture into entrepreneurship. Let me go real quick. The centers see

us as navigators, like small businesses. There are a total of 22 VBOCs across the country, so every part of the country is being covered by a VBOC.

Texas is one of those blessed states that has two VBOCs, Patrick in Arlington and myself, down here in Edinburg, and we cover the entire state. Now, some of the services that we provide are training, counseling and referral. The trainings, I don't know if you guys have heard about the Boost a Business training. This program, it is a two-step program that was developed by the SBA and the University of Syracuse a few years back.

The first step -- it is to attend one of these Boots to Business within the military bases, or Boots to Business reboot training off-base for those of us who have transitioned out into the civilian world. Again, upon completion of this you will have access to additional resources to complete the second step, which is an optional revenue readiness. And this program, it is offered by the Mississippi State University.

Again, if you like this program and want to go into it a little bit deeper, that is the route to go. In addition to the Boost a Business, which this program was derived in the MBA. At the completion of this, as a friend of mine likes to say, you will be dangerous enough to ask the right questions and you will be prepared. In addition to other programs, it is the ETP, Entrepreneurial Training Programs that we offer at a bigger cities without a military base as a supplement to some of these trainings.

And in addition, other trainings that we offer. Counseling -- we offer business counseling, again, for those startups or existing businesses wanting to grow. 101, services are confidential and are no cost to you guys. On these counseling sessions we assist you with business plan development and the importance of these business plans, because oftentimes you have heard veterans coming out of the service, getting a business loan, opening their doors for the business and then asking do I need a business plan?

And these are still stories that we come across. And, yes. This is important. Having a business plan in place which will give you a clear understanding of which route you need to go, what is your strength or weakness within the business you're trying to start, along with better decision-making. And this is not a onetime deal. Business plans are a continuing, living document that you must review, at least on a yearly basis.

In situations like this year, everything came to a halt with this virus. But again, this is the importance of having a business plan in place. In addition to that, other services we provide are access to databases that we can assist you providing some of this market research and industry analysis information. Moreover, we have financial projections. As a startup, it is very crucial for you guys to have a projection.

Come to understand how long is it really going to take you to break even. Entrepreneurs tend to be very optimistic like, the first month I'm going to start making such amount of dollars. The reality is, you have to be realistic. You have to keep it very true to yourself and realistic in how the market is doing, too. And how long is it truly going to take me to break even.

Besides that, we also do the access to capital, not that us as VBOCs do lending, but we work with partners. Some of the local lenders, micro-lenders, offer assistance to you guys. But we help you be lender-ready. We go over with you what's your total project cost, what have you considered. Going back to how long is it going to take you to break even.

And then from there you move on to the points that Patrick tells you on the access to capital. Last but not least, the referral information. It is very important. Oftentimes we're not an expert in all the industries and topics, so we have a network partner that we work closely with. If we cannot help you with something, there's always somebody that can help you. We'll be glad to assist you, putting you in contact with that person that can assist you.

Now, again, all of our services are no cost, and they are to the military community. By that I mean to the transitioning active duty members, veterans of all eras, disabled veterans, National Guard Reserve, and spouses. Oftentimes you come across services for veterans but not spouses. In our case, it extends to the spouse as well. Going to the second part of the question, what resources are available in addition to the VBOC.

We have a great SBA resource partner network. We have the SBDCs. They can assist you as well with advising, with the business plan development, access to capital. Similar to the technical assistance, we can assist you with. But they have more locations. Here within the state of Texas, there are four networks and they're roughly around 60 plus SBDCs that are close to you. So it's another great resource for you to have, along with score chapters.

They can also assist you with some of this technical assistance and there are more than 3,000 volunteers across the country. Check them out, along with women's business centers. I believe there is at least five here within the state of Texas that can also provide you some of this assistance that you might need. And last but not least, the PTACs, although they are not a SBA resource partner, they're a great partner to have and they provide valuable information when it comes to procurement, whether it be federal, state, and local contracting, certification.

I believe there are at least seven PTACs across the state of Texas. All of those are here for you guys. These are some, not all, but some of the resources that you might want to have. All of those will work together, ultimately, the benefit is to see you guys succeed. And with that, Kelly, I believe I have answered the question. Let

me know if you have other ones. Thank you.

>> Moderator: Thank you. That was really comprehensive, and as our audience can tell, the VBOC is a rich resource of advice and resources. And Juan is part of the VBOC which is part of the UT Rio Grande Valley system. Thank you for that, Juan. I'm going to talk now to Maggie from the Texas Veterans Commission. Welcome, Maggie. Thank you for joining us.

>> Thank you for having me.

>> Moderator: Great. I am going to get straight to the questions. We want to keep the pace moving here for the audience. Two questions here on the slide. First, how many veteran-owned businesses are there in Texas, and how much tax revenue do they contribute to Texas? I'm looking forward to hearing you reiterate what Chip Osborne has already said in his speech, but it's great to reiterate it.

>> Absolutely. Chip did already mention the fact that in Texas, veteran-owned businesses in 2019 contributed \$9.7 million in tax revenue and are expected to contribute at least \$8 million in 2020, even with the pandemic going on. And currently, to answer the first part of that question, we have over 10,000 veteran-owned businesses in the state of Texas. To be exact, as of May of this year, May of 2020, we have 10,661 veteran-owned businesses in the great state of Texas.

>> Moderator: Wow. That is really impressive. Thank you. The second question, what current activities are the veteran entrepreneur program consultants working on? And Maggie, you're a veteran entrepreneur program consultant. So please tell us about those programs.

>> Sure, absolutely. We've got a few big projects that we've been working on. We're excited to announce that as of October 26th of this year, we are releasing a new Texas veteran-owned business logo, as you can see here on the screen. That's a snapshot of it, verified by the Texas Veterans Commission. So this veteran-own -- Texas veteran-owned business logo will be available to our veteran business owners starting October 26th of this year.

And the real purpose of this new logo is to verify and to recognize our veteran-owned businesses in the state of Texas. And the requirements for that logo or that certification are that they must be a veteran, must be a veteran-owned business operating in the state of Texas, and the veteran ownership must be 51% or greater.

The next project that our consultants are working on is we've got coming up some great training from Google, actually, on October 22nd. We've got Google coming to give us a workshop called Grow with Google, with their digital coaches. It's SEO training. So it's digital training for our veterans that will focus on really driving traffic to the business website and adding that veteran attribute on the Google searches.

And it will be conducted during the lunch hour on October 22nd

from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. so that hopefully we can really maximize attendance for that. That's our Google SEO training. And ongoing we have our podcast that many of you may or may not have heard of. We've got the Texas Veterans Mean Business podcast, which is really an exciting podcast that we feature someone every month.

We've got currently 12 episodes that are in our catalog, and we will be starting season two in October, so next month. The links for that will be provided, I believe at the end of this presentation or when we send out information to all of the viewers. And we're always looking for veterans that want to come on and talk about their business, talk about their successes, and what has helped them be a successful business in the great state of Texas.

So anyone that's interested in being on that podcast is welcome to contact us. Probably the best way to contact us, as Chip mentioned, is you can go to our website, which is [www.tvc.texas.gov](http://www.tvc.texas.gov), and you can click on the entrepreneur page. And there's a web form that you can fill out on there. You can also email us into our mailbox that all of our consultants have access to, [vep@tvc.texas.gov](mailto:vep@tvc.texas.gov). So that's, again, [vep@tvc.texas.gov](mailto:vep@tvc.texas.gov).

And those are our main programs coming up. As Juan and Patrick mentioned, we also partner with the VBOCs and SBA, and PTACs and the other amazing resources that we have for our veterans in Texas. And I just love that we're all on this call together, because we're all amazing collaboration partners. And that's really what it takes in our great state to help our veterans to not only start their businesses, but grow them. So I'm excited to be here.

>> Moderator: Thank you so much for that, Maggie. I agree. It is great to have the ecosystem on the call so veterans can see how many organizations exist for them and what the resources are in each of those organizations. Thank you for that description and your contact information. People can access that after the event through the links we will send them.

Moving along, we will mention now that the live Q&A feed is open. If you have a question that you haven't heard an answer to yet, or a very specific business question, please type it into the live Q&A feed. You'll be able to see it there. Our colleagues are going to look at your questions, and they're going to publish questions that are broadly relevant.

Please look in the published or featured feed. If you see a question you want to hear the answer to, please like it. We're going to prioritize the questions that have the most likes because we may not and often don't get to all the questions that you're asking. Inevitably we don't always get to them, but you know where we are. You're going to have our contact information. You can reach out directly to the organizations here today our ourselves and ask that question if you feel it didn't get answered today.

So please, start typing your questions. I'm going to move along

now and then we're going to go to the live Q&A. Now I am going to welcome VR Small. Thank you for joining us. She's from the Veteran Women's Enterprise Center in the Dallas area.

>> Hi. Thank you so much for having me.

>> Moderator: We're delighted that you could get here. VR, I have two questions. I know you're keen to answer my first one, which is about your new business growth and access to capital program. Please tell us about that.

>> Kelly, I do want to tell you about the program, but for those that may not know anything about our organization, I want to share about the Veteran Women's Enterprise Center. We help veterans scale for success. It's divided into four categories. We do this by establishing strategic alliances, similar to the ones we have with Homeless Veterans Services of Dallas. Our model facility is a block and a half from the main VA in the Dallas area.

And then we moved to our business growth and access to capital loan fund. We work to leverage public and private opportunities. So this loan fund is in collaboration with People Fund, one of the CDFIs that Patrick mentioned. We were able to leverage dollars from one of our sponsors and then match those dollars with People Fund to create a loan fund specifically for women veterans and military spouse entrepreneurs.

What's interesting about this loan fund is one, we were able to get them to provide you a 3% fixed rate. It is a 12-month fund. It is focused on business growth. So although we're going to look at your credit and all of those other issues, one of our main things that we're looking at is the viability of the business to grow with this influx of funding. It is a micro-loan fund, minimum 2500, maximum amount is 10,000.

So, there is no credit score amount that you have to come up with. And there is no "no." I like to say there's never a no, there's a not now, because the program comes with mandatory technical assistance. So even if you are approved we want to make sure that you understand the dollars you're getting, how to use those dollars to best grow your business. But if you're not ready, we want to make sure that we can get you ready.

So there is a technical program in collaboration with People Fund that we will take any applicants through that are not ready to get a loan and make sure that you become loan-ready. So we're very excited about the opportunity to provide something specifically to women veteran entrepreneurs and military spouses, because we know -- the statistics tell us that women have less access to capital than our brothers in arms, and males in general.

So that's a little bit about our program. That program will launch and be available for applications early October. We will be doing an email campaign, so if you are not on our newsletter list, we invite you to visit our website at [veteranwomensec.org](http://veteranwomensec.org) and sign

up for our newsletter. But it will also be posted on all of our social media, which you can find us at #veteranwomenSEC, on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

>> Moderator: Thank you. Those links are on this slide. People will have access to them later.

>> Awesome.

>> Moderator: That's a fantastic opportunity, that loan. That's a great rate. I love that you're loaning money to people, potentially, and helping them with that startup phase, which is enormously challenging. Money is important, but the knowledge is critical and you're going to be providing them with that knowledge and support. The second question is an opportunity for you to talk about the programs that you run to support veteran women entrepreneurs. Please tell us about those.

>> Absolutely. I want to address one of the comments that you made. One of the things that we try to do at the center is to not duplicate services. So we try to fill that gap. There are so many programs, as you've heard about earlier in this presentation, that help with startup. We focus on those businesses that are already functioning and are hitting a wall, they can't get past that 50,000 or \$100,000 mark and they need additional assistance.

Sometimes these are bridge loans, someone has gotten a grant or they are about to get a contract and they need some money to take them from that contract to where they actually get paid. So there's a lot of opportunities. It's not just about startup funds, but it's also about helping businesses grow. I really want to put a real focus on that, because this is a business loan. So you've already got a business and you want to try to take that business to the next level.

I'll tell you a little bit about our programs. During COVID-19 we started our virtual programming. So we have a Monday morning message, the COVID-19 weekly update. That's our hot topics. When we have a hot topic that's relevant in the business industry, we will bring on a presenter and make sure that they bring that information to you. We've had our SBA associate administrator for our veteran development programs. We've had our DFW SBA director on our program.

So all of those programs are loaded to our YouTube channel. If you want to listen to them. And they're also on five different audio platforms that you can access from our home page on our website. In addition we have our trending Thursdays tips. That's in collaboration with our partners. And I like what Maggie said. It's so important to have partners. We partner with the Texas Veterans Commission Entrepreneur Program.

We also partner with the Texas Women's University Center for Women Entrepreneurs, and Dallas ISD Minority and Women Enterprise Center. We can't be everything to everybody. But our slogan is connecting you is what we do. And if we don't have the resources you need, we want to be able to connect you to a provider that does. And

we also work with all of the SBA partners, such as SCORE. I'm a certified mentor. SBDCs and the Women's Business Center.

In addition, we just launched our next-level transformation program, our COVID-19 master class series. It's about to come to an end but we were able to help five female veteran entrepreneurs with 25 hours of critical technical assistance and a \$5,000 grant to help them recover and stabilize their business. We like to say we're not just helping businesses survive COVID-19, but we're giving or helping them transform their business to the next level so they can truly thrive.

We're really excited about bring that program into 2021. You'll hear information from the ladies about what they were able to accomplish. This is going to be an exciting addition to what we offer. Last but not least, the center itself is brick and mortar. In 2021, we hope we will be back at full scale. We have coworking space, a conference center, as well as a cafe lounge and we will be opening virtual mailboxes.

All of that information you will be able to access at our website. Kelly has everything up here on the screen, all of our links, our phone number, our email is there for more information. One last thing, Kelly. We have partnered with Challenge America. They are doing their COVID-19 maker challenge. For those of you who are innovators, on October 9th we will have a kickoff, and will be forming teams across the nation to look at what -- how can we help our first responders in relationship to COVID-19.

So if you have an idea, a product, a service, something that you believe will help our first responders be more effective and you want to bring that idea to the forefront, we challenge you to get in the game. Join the challenge. It's our COVID-19, it's your last maker challenge and it will be on our website by the end of this week. You can sign up for the October 9th event.

Join a team or come as an individual and you will be assigned to a team. This is a great way to get your innovative juices going and get excited about creating new products, new services that can help our first responders. Please mark your calendar for Wednesday, October 21st. It is our annual Women's Business Week Conference. We are still going to have it. It's going to be virtual. And we have some great providers connecting with you at this event from 8:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Again, that's October 21st, the third Wednesday when we normally do our Women Warriors -- Winning the Business channel. Instead we will do our annual conference and invite you to get connected.

>> Moderator: Excellent. Thank you for all that information. That was excellent and fantastic, and all that information is in the slide deck. I'm going to move along to our final panelist. Thank you for your patience, John, from Combined Arms. Thank you for joining

us.

>> Thanks so much for having me today, and thanks as well to all the presenters. We're really looking forward to helping as many veteran entrepreneurs and their families as we can. To answer these last two questions, there's a lot of programs out there outside of government-provided resources, because those are vast and fantastic. But there's a lot of other complementary programs. To review some of the best programs that have been mentioned, the VBOCs, we have two in our state, you met the other gentlemen earlier.

The Small Business Development Centers are federal resources, the Procurement Technical Resource Centers, the Texas Veterans Commission, great partners, thank them for all they do and very exciting to see more data and information. There's also the entrepreneurship boot camp for veterans at Texas A&M University. I went through that as a veteran entrepreneur myself before I started my first small business.

It was a bike tour business in Houston where we trained veterans to be bike tour guides while they were studying at the University of Houston and downtown to teach people about the culture and history about our great city and state. And we ended up selling it to a very big bike company. I've been through the whole process of starting a business, launching a business, being successful and selling it. I use Entrepreneurship Boot Camp for Veterans to launch my business plan and better understand what's going on and how to access those programs.

And Bunker Labs, I haven't heard much about them. I wanted to give them a shoutout. They have created one of the greatest online and in-person communities for veterans and families to engage in small business and resources, networking, and mentorship. They have a residence program, so check them out, our great friends over there.

Finally Rice University in Houston has a battle every year open to veterans across the state and the nation. You can apply to go into a pitch competition like Shark Tank and compete for dollars to help launch your business. Check that out. Everything veterans may need in Texas to be successful outside of launching their new venture, please check us out at [combinedarms.us](http://combinedarms.us). we are connecting veterans to claims, healthcare, housing, health, social connectedness, volunteer engagement, all the fantastic resources and services provided by the Texas Veterans Commission is and many other partners on the call today and out there throughout the state.

Please feel free to use us as a resource. I'll be sure to put our website in the chat window. Thanks again for having me, and excited about the questions.

>> Moderator: Excellent. Thank you so much, and for being patient. We've had so much shared, so many rich resources. Thank you also to our audience for being patient. We're now going to move along and open up the live questions that you've been typing and my

colleagues have been answering some of them and publishing others. I'm going to hand it over to Jarvis now, who's going to take care of those live questions.

>> Thank you, Kelly. Thank you, everyone, for being so patient. We went over on time, but I see some of the live questions have been answered in the chat. I do want to address some of them as well. This first one was a question that I believe is more directed towards the VA, but I do want to refer to Patrick. The question is, how do you apply for a veterans verification letter and how long does it take? Patrick, could you reiterate that there is a separation between the VA resources and the small business resources?

>> Yeah. And we want to clarify that particular question, Jarvis. That might be a better question for TVC if they're talking about verification, because TVC used to issue verification letters in order to give folks access to a discount when setting up your legal entity. But if you're interested in doing business with the VA, that is a verification process as well. Depending on which question the person is asking, I can answer the side for the VA.

If they're interested in doing business with the VA, my office is verification organization. So we actually walk you through and take you through that verification process so you can connect with the VBOC. But most of the verification is done through PTACs, Procurement Technical Assistance Centers. I just happen to have -- my office happens to be qualified to take you through that verification process as well.

The easiest way to get started is to go directly to the VA website. I'll put that link in the chat as soon as I finish talking. Go directly to the VA website, click on the link. I don't know how to say it. Click on the link and that's the department at the VA that handles VA verifications, if that's what the question was, Jarvis.

>> Facilitator: I wasn't entirely sure. I assumed it was. I don't know if Maggie had additional -- to speak about the verification as well. Maggie?

>> Maggie: I can definitely talk about that. We used to have Senate bill 1049, which expired in 2019, which allowed veterans to get the veteran verification letter from us at TVC. And that would waive their \$300 filing fee with the Secretary of State, as well as the franchise taxes for five years. Now, some veterans, if you've already started your business, and you just need a verification letter showing that you are a veteran and that you're wanting to start a business, we can still give you that verification letter.

You can go to our website, [TVC.Texas.gov](http://TVC.Texas.gov), fill out a form requesting a letter. One of our consultants, depending on the area you're in, will get back with you within 48 to 72 hours requesting any additional information that we may need from you. And the turnaround to get the letter is pretty quick. We would need filing paperwork showing you have already filed your business.

If you started your business between January 1st, 2016 and December 31st, 2019 you could be eligible, possibly, for a refund of your filing fees if you did not utilize that benefit. So the best place to go to apply for that is on our TVC website entrepreneur tab.

>> Facilitator: Thank you for that clarification, and for pointing out the filing fee as well as the franchise tax that ended on December 31st, 2019. This next question, I'm going to relay back to you, Patrick. You answered it in the chat, but I want to reiterate for everyone about events, particularly networking events. The question is, could there be a networking event for veterans, especially for those in transition?

The challenge we have is not knowing who to speak with based on existing veteran experience. Building networking skills that is different from working in a military environment and integrating into the Texas community. So, networking events for transitioning personnel. And also if you have additional, Juan. But, Patrick.

>> Absolutely. There are lots and lots of networking events, depending on what level of business development you're at. The Business Beyond the Battlefield conference is virtual this year, it is four consecutive days from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, November 2nd through the 5th. And there is a great virtual networking tool there. But every month all of our resource partners out there are doing some type of virtual event.

VR does a virtual networking event for the Women's Veterans Enterprise Center on Monday where the women veterans get together. Bunker Labs is constantly doing virtual events, so their agenda comes out every week. The Institute for Veteran and Military Families is constantly holding virtual events. I'm saying virtual now because we're in an environment where most of the networking that's taking place is being done virtually, but outside of that virtual event, those same organizations that I'm mentioning right now actually have live events.

And there is a live event coming to Dallas here tomorrow, as a matter of fact, for All Call, an organization out of California that's created a national networking event to bring veteran and military connected business owners together to network with one another, exchange business cards, exchange business ideas, and grow their businesses.

So the best way for you -- in my opinion -- to tap in is to tap into any one of these partners. Tap into the VBOC, tap into the Women's Veterans Enterprise Center, Bunker Labs, Patriot Boot Camp, all of these resources out there and get on their mailing list and their calendars so that you can constantly be updated on when is the next event.

Juan and I and all of the VBOCs are on the military installations every month hosting that Boots to Business course, a two-day entrepreneurship course. And adjacent to mine, we also do networking

events. I hope that answers the question.

>> Absolutely. One thing I want to add to it is these webinars came out of necessity because of COVID-19, but in a traditional year, this would be taken live. And outside of being informative, our events would be networking opportunities as well. Chip mentioned the veteran event that took place last year in El Paso, and a huge part of that is connecting people with people. So when we can return back to some form of normalcy, that will again be a goal of ours, is to include the networking component.

But as far as virtual, those are great resources that are upcoming. This next question I am actually going to refer to Juan. And it is a question about -- I'm sorry if I mispronounced your name. I'm already certified as a service disabled veteran-owned small business. Do I need another veteran certification? There's no other information other than that, Juan. But I think she may mean to do business with other contracts, for example, with city, state, or local.

>> Juan: Thank you for the great question. If and only if you're trying to get into the contracting part, that's where certifications really come in handy. If you're already a disabled veteran, certified, unless you are a woman also, so that way you're a woman and a disabled veteran, then you can have both. Otherwise that's more than enough. And that should help you.

Again, if you're a woman and a disabled veteran at the same time, then you can apply for both. But besides that, no need. And if and only if you're trying to get into the contracting part. Otherwise, it's really -- no other distinction or help for that.

>> Jarvis: Thank you, Juan. Another thing I'll add is, Historically Underutilized Businesses, that program can be obtained if you intend to do business with state agencies or universities. So that's a certification. There are similar certifications at the local level, whether it be at the county or city. So that may be an option for you. We are running very short on time. It's actually past 2:00, but I'd like to get another question answered.

So, this question is -- it comes from anonymous. My wife and I are starting a sole proprietorship. Can we be recognized as a veteran-owned business? A sole proprietorship, can we be recognized as a veteran-owned business?

>> Yes. The answer to that question is it doesn't matter whether you're a sole proprietorship, LLC, it doesn't matter what legal entity you choose. The designation of veteran-owned business is based upon the ownership. If you own the business, as was mentioned earlier by Maggie, in the state of Texas it's 51%. In most states that's where it's going to be as well. And at the federal level it's 51%.

>> Jarvis: Maggie, could you reiterate about the program, when it may become live to where a veteran can have that label?

>> Are you referring to the new Texas veteran-owned business

logo?

>> Correct.

>> That program will start up on October 26th of this year. Next month.

>> Facilitator: Thank you so much for that. Unfortunately, I have been over my time. Thank you so much to our panelists, who I know answered a tremendous amount of those questions directly in the chat. But we are going to close the event just to be respectful of everyone else's time here. At this time, I'll pass back over to Kelly.

>> Kelly: Great. Thank you, Jarvis. Yes, we tried to get through quite a few questions. If anybody didn't get their questions answered, the contact information for the office is here. And I'll pause for a second. We also have the contact information for our panelists. Please feel free to reach out directly. If you feel you're not getting the answer, you can email our small business team. I think the email address is here.

Yes. At the very top of that slide. Email us and we will help you get that answer. I will also mention that in our question and answer feed there was information from UT, I think Josef was the name of the correspondent. He's involved in UT at Austin with resources for the military in terms of leadership, strategy, and so on, and veterans resources.

I'm going to add contact information for Joseph to the deck so that people can check on that if they would like to as well. And so we are at the end of our event. Thank you for your patience. We have run over. I'm going to ask Adriana Cruz to say a few words to close out the event. And I want to thank everybody for joining us, thank the veterans for their service, and hand it over to Adriana.

>> Adriana: Thank you for joining us. If you need further assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out to our office. Thank you all for putting this event on. And thanks, everybody, for joining, and have a great day. Bye-bye.

>> Great. Thank you again. We are now closing the event and it will be no longer live. Thank you.

>> Bye, everyone.

[End of Session, 2:05 p.m. CT]