



Operation Boots to Business: From Service to Startup
A Partnership between SBA, VA and DoD,
The Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University
and SBA Resource Partners
Entrepreneurship Training Program

The Issue

Entrepreneurship and small business ownership are key opportunities for service members as they transition into civilian life. There are over 250,000 service members each year transitioning out of the military. Many have faced constricted employment opportunities during the economic downturn. In 2011, the average unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans aged 18-24 was 30.2%; the unemployment rate for veterans aged 25-34 was 12.0%. Lacking sufficient opportunities in traditional careers, many transitioning service members will need to explore alternatives, including entrepreneurship. Other transitioning service members will choose entrepreneurship simply because it is the right choice for them and their families.

The Opportunity

Transitioning veterans are natural entrepreneurs, possessing the training, experience, and leadership skills to start businesses and create jobs. According to the most recent U.S. Census Data, veteran-owned firms represent 9 percent of all U.S. firms. These 2.45 million veteran-owned businesses employed 5.793 million individuals. Veterans over-index in entrepreneurship. In the private sector workforce, veterans are at least 45 percent more likely than those with no active-duty military experience to be self-employed. About one-quarter of our veterans have indicated that they are interested in starting or buying their own business. Programming, targeted at transitioning Service Members, drives interest and creates opportunities for our veterans to become business owners and job creators.

What SBA and the Administration Plan to Do To Help Transitioning Service Members

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) recognizes the contributions that veterans make by owning and running businesses that employ millions of Americans. SBA believes that the opportunity exists to support more veterans so they can grow businesses and create jobs. By partnering with SBA's Resource Partners (Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), Women's Business Centers (WBCs), SCORE, and Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs)) and Syracuse University to deliver an introduction to entrepreneurship, SBA will provide transitioning service members with the knowledge, tools and resources they need to evaluate opportunities and become successful

Goal

To provide entrepreneurship awareness and opt-in training nationwide to the 250,000 transitioning service members from all branches of the military no later than 2013.

entrepreneurs as they transition out of the military. We will help them get started, and introduce them to our Resource Partner network for support throughout the life-cycle of their new businesses.

The Boots to Business program will use a multi-phase approach to introduce transitioning service members to the fundamentals of small business ownership and to the SBA tools and resources available to them. Subject to funding, by year-end 2013 the program will provide entrepreneurship *awareness* and *opt-in training* nationwide to the 250,000 service members from all branches of the military that transition each year.

Background

In the fall of 2010 and 2011 President Obama called for the creation of two joint task forces: the Department of Defense-Department of Veterans Affairs (DoD-VA) Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force and the Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development led by SBA. The goals of the task forces are to 1) develop proposals to maximize the career readiness of all service members; and 2) create proposals to better support veteran owned small business owners. Both task forces identified the need to create a nationwide entrepreneurship training program for transitioning service members. As an outcome of these Task Forces, SBA is working with DoD and VA to include entrepreneurship training as a part of the overall, service-wide changes to the existing Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

The overall goal of the “new TAP” is to strengthen the transition of all of our service members from military to civilian life and to prepare them for success in the next phase of their life. In the “new TAP,” each service member will receive “core” education in post-service Veterans’ benefits. In addition, each may choose from three “optional” tracks for further, targeted training: 1) Higher Education; 2) Technical Training; and 3) Entrepreneurship. SBA and its partner network (including Syracuse and SBA’s Resource Partners) will deliver the entrepreneurship track to those transitioning service members who opt-in to receive entrepreneurship training.

Implementation of the National Program in FY2013 The Operation Boots to Business program will build on SBA’s role as a national leader in entrepreneurship training. SBA will leverage its ongoing collaboration with Syracuse University’s Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) to provide comprehensive training materials specifically geared toward transitioning service members. SBA’s expert Resource Partner network, including Women’s Business Centers, SCORE chapters, Small Business Development Centers and Veterans’ Business Outreach Centers, are already providing targeted, actionable, real-world entrepreneurship training to over 100,000 veterans every year, many of whom are service members transitioning out of the military. Through the Boots to Business initiative, SBA Resource Partners will build on these efforts by deploying this expertise at military bases around the country to collaboratively deliver face-to-face introductory entrepreneurship training as a network. Our Resource Partners will also introduce transitioning service members to the lifetime business support available to them in our Resource Partner network. Syracuse and its affiliated University partners will then deliver intensive, 8-week *online* business planning training to those service members who choose such training after the face-to-face introductory course. Of course, counselors and mentors from SBA’s Resource Partner network will be there to work with service members throughout the eight-week online course, and thereafter as these service members start their businesses.

There is great work that is already going on around the country by our Resource Partners to provide transitioning service members and veterans with entrepreneurship training. At the same time there has been a national push to have a standardized curriculum to insure every service member has the opportunity to receive entrepreneurship training. The national curriculum, enhanced by the tailored approach and expertise of our resource partner network, helps us ensure that every transitioning service member has this opportunity. This national, Resource Partner-delivered model is dependent on FY2013 funding and statutory authority to help support the training that will occur on bases across the country.

National Boots to Business Initiative

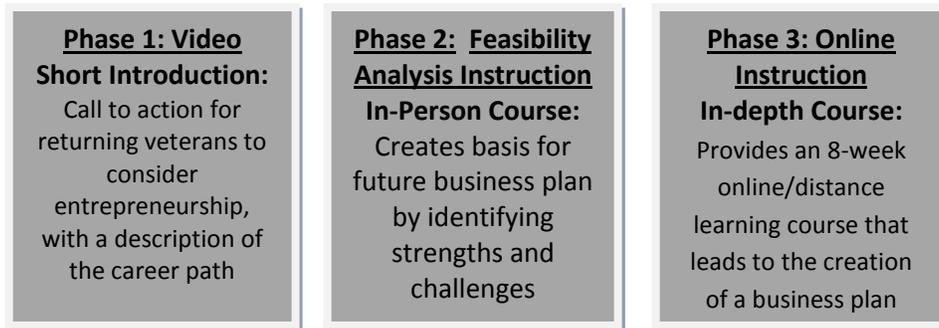
Boots to Business is a national initiative that will first be piloted in 2012. The national program, when it is rolled out in FY2013, will be a robust training program. The pilot, to be rolled out is a more streamlined three-phase training program. Below is an overview of the national initiative.

The **national** rollout of Operation Boots to Business: from Service to Startup aims to provide exposure to entrepreneurship to the **250,000** service members who transition every year. It will be piloted at four to five sites in FY2012, and will be rolled out across the nation (subject to funding) during FY2013.

Getting Started:

To test the initiative prior to national rollout, SBA is working to deliver a streamlined version of the Boots to Business entrepreneurship training.

The pilot with consists of only three progressive phases to deliver exposure, introduction, and in-depth training for service members interested in business ownership.



Phase 1: Short Introduction on Entrepreneurship (10 minute video)

- **Estimated Number of Participants:** ALL transitioning and participating in the pilot.
- **Status:** Prior to 2-day pilot

Phase 2: Feasibility Analysis Instruction (2 days)

- **Overview:** Phase 2 guides participants through a 2-day class room instruction focused on creating a feasibility analysis for a business plan. This training will be delivered face-to-face by our Resource Partners on-base. The Feasibility Analysis Deliverable will represent the outcome of the 2-day intensive seminar. The document will serve as the basis for future business planning efforts, and is designed to

assist the service member in developing an ‘actionable’ plan for subsequent effort focused on launching a new venture. A pre-formatted template will be used to facilitate the completion of the analysis during the 2-day training and participants will ‘walk away’ from the training with a completed feasibility study of their own business concept.

- **Estimated Number of Participants:** 15% of all transitioning service members

Phase 3: In-depth Online Entrepreneurship Course (8-week course)

- **Estimated Number of Participants:** 50
- **Registration Information:** Registration information for the 8-week course is provided in a slide in the 90 minute curriculum slide deck, so that participants in the 2 day course can learn about their opportunity to sign up for the 8-week online course. Register for the 8-week online course by going to <http://boots2business.org> and hitting the ‘register’ tab, filling out the registration form, and entering the provided code. The original version of the 8-week online course will be managed by professors in Syracuse University’s network. The SBA is also exploring self-paced curriculums for future uses.
- **Delivery:** By Syracuse and its affiliated University instructors/partners

Estimated Number of Participants: 50 service members, representing all branches of the military.

Partner Expectations for the rollout:

Small Business Administration (SBA) is executing upon the following:

- Collaborate directly with its Resource Partners (VBOC,WBC, SCORE, SBDC) to deliver Phases 2 of the training curriculum;
- Help identify performance metrics and evaluation.

SBA selected Resource Partners and District Offices are coordinating personnel, scheduling and instruction for the following:

- Deliver the 2 day course (Phase 2); and,
- Provide follow-up with veteran where appropriate.

The Military Installation is responsible for the following:

- Facilitate collaboration between base personnel and SBA’s selected local Resource Partners regarding delivery of training;
- Help identify performance metrics and evaluation during and after training initiative;
- Collaborate with SBA to identify opportunities for growth and continuance of the initiative; and
- Collaborate with SBA to jointly develop and disseminate marketing materials and conduct other promotional activities related to Boots to Business.