



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

101 N. 14TH ST, 17TH FLOOR
RICHMOND VA 23219

Air Force Association
American Legion
AMVETS
Association of the United States Army
Disabled American Veterans
Fifth Baptist Veterans Ministry
Fleet Reserve Association
Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America
Korean War Veterans Association
Legion of Valor of the U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the World Wars
National Association for Uniformed Services
Navy Seabee Veterans of America
Non-Commissioned Officers Association
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Reserve Officers Association
Roanoke Valley Veterans Council
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association
Virginia National Guard Association
Women Marines Association

December 21, 2016

JLC Contact
Lauren Augustine
202-346-3269
lauren.ml.augustine@gmail.com

Position Paper 2017-05 **Virginia Veteran Entrepreneurship Grant Pilot Program**

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To launch the Virginia Veteran Entrepreneurship Grant Pilot Program under the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) to:
 - a. Increase entrepreneurship opportunities – business start-up and business retention – for Virginia veterans and transitioning service members;
 - b. Mentor and train more veteran entrepreneurs to have the necessary skills to execute their business plans and to grow and sustain their businesses;
 - c. Identify organizations that successfully deliver entrepreneurship services, and, through grant funding, enable these organizations to provide expanded entrepreneurship training/assistance to Virginia veterans; and
 - d. Spur entrepreneurship in high-demand sectors (ex. cybersecurity, IT, and agriculture) to help grow and diversify Virginia’s economy.
2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - a. Small businesses and entrepreneurship are central to our economy. A June 2016 report noted that “*There are currently 2.5 million veteran-owned businesses in America, representing 9.1 percent of all U.S. businesses that combined generate about \$1 trillion in receipts and employ nearly 6 million Americans.*” It also noted that veterans are more likely to be self-employed than non-veterans.
 - b. There are organizations that can provide entrepreneurship training and mentoring for Virginia veterans; this can be expanded with grant funding.
3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - a. The path to entrepreneurship is challenging, but military service has given veterans the motivation, skills, and abilities they need to succeed. They just need the right training and help getting started.
 - b. Partnering with organizations that have a proven track record of working with veteran entrepreneurs will be a force multiplier, allowing us to keep these highly skilled and motivated men and women in Virginia.
 - c. Under the pilot program, DVS would:
 - i. Develop guidelines laying out the objectives of the grant program, general requirements for applying and qualifying for a grant, and the metrics against which grant awardee performance will be measured;
 - ii. Solicit grant-funding proposals from organizations that currently provide veteran entrepreneur training and mentoring in Virginia;
 - iii. Evaluate the proposals and award grants to those organizations that are best positioned to begin providing services veteran entrepreneurs immediately; and
 - iv. Monitor and evaluate the results achieved by grant awardees to ensure that the program’s objectives are being met.
4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly approve legislation creating the *Virginia Veteran Entrepreneurship Grant Pilot Program* under the Department of Veterans Services and appropriate \$900,000 (GF) per year in FY18 and FY19 to award grants to companies that provide entrepreneurship training to veterans. Also, that the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) continue its work on veteran entrepreneurship and develop additional recommendations for consideration.