



VETERANS
FLORIDA

Annual Report
2025

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TO: The Governor of the State of Florida, Members of the Cabinet, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives

December 1, 2025

Dear Distinguished Leaders,

It is my privilege to present the Veterans Florida Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2024–25, marking the organization’s tenth year of dedicated service. In alignment with Florida Statute, our mission remains clear: to attract and retain veterans and their families, encouraging them to make Florida their permanent home.

Since 2016, 8,318 servicemembers, veterans, and spouses have participated in and completed our SkillBridge training, career placement, workforce training, entrepreneur training and workshops, and agriculture training services with employers and training providers all over Florida.

This year, our nationwide, veteran-focused marketing campaign continues to expand its reach, drawing more than 684,000 new visitors to the Veterans Florida website through our ongoing partnership with VISIT FLORIDA. These visitors gain critical information about the benefits and opportunities Florida provides to veterans and their families, and some apply for our services. From website visitors, job fair attendees, and other outreach events, we received applications from 3,430 servicemembers, veterans, and spouses seeking assistance and training under our programs.

Our Board of Directors and staff remain dedicated to accountability, transparency, and cost-effective program delivery, recognizing the trust placed in us as stewards of public and private resources. I am proud of what we have accomplished this year and grateful for the opportunity to continue serving veterans and their families.

Looking forward, Veterans Florida will continue to serve, attract, educate, and empower veterans, ensuring they and their families can thrive and build meaningful lives in the Sunshine State.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Jeff M. Cathey

Chair, Veterans Florida Board of Directors

CC: James Hartsell, Executive Director, Florida Department of Veterans Affairs

Board of Directors for Fiscal Year 2023-24

Appointed by the Governor



Jeff M. Cathey, Chair

Jeff M. Cathey served as Head, Military and Veteran Affairs for Bank of America, retiring in 2022.

Leading the Military Banking Overseas Division, Jeff was responsible for managing and executing the military banking contract with the Department of Defense. He led a 600+ global person team, headquartered in San Antonio, TX, to ensure banking services and products were readily available, through 62 financial centers and a robust ATM network, to servicemembers deployed in ten countries in Europe, Asia, and around the globe.

As Head of Military Affairs, Jeff led a dedicated group focused on support of active-duty military and their families, and successful reintegration of servicemembers into the civilian sector. He was responsible for business development and engagement in the Washington, DC arena and nationally. His team was integral in exploring marketing and philanthropic opportunities, as well as events supporting the military community worldwide.

Cathey joined Bank of America in April 2008 directly from the Pentagon. Jeff served with distinction in the U.S. Navy for 29 years, and led commands worldwide at all levels to include two fleet squadrons and a carrier air wing in USS Enterprise. Captain Cathey flew 100 combat missions and is a decorated veteran of Operation Urgent Fury, Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Jeff also served in Washington as Director for Senate Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Raised in Tampa, Jeff played football at the University of Tampa and earned his Bachelor of Arts finance degree from the University of South Florida. He earned a Master’s Degree in National Security and Strategic Studies at the Naval War College. Jeff serves on the board of directors for Veterans Florida and Our Community Salutes. He is currently a student, a recent adjunct professor at the University of South Florida, and an umpire. He is married with three adult children.

Governor Ron DeSantis appointed Jeff to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2022.



Jonathan Fay, Secretary

Jon Fay is an award-winning leader in the military, public, and private sectors. He serves as the Director of Asset Management with Airline MRO Parts, fostering a stronger, thriving aviation industry by overseeing the strategic asset management of more than \$1B in international investment packages.

Jon is passionate about building high-performing teams and effective relationships to drive innovative, winning strategies. His career spans over 24 years of service as a naval flight officer, including operational

tours in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Sahayogi Haat in Nepal, as well as tours in the U.S. House of Representatives as a Defense Fellow in the 115th Congress, and as a Legislative Liaison in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Jon's career culminated as the Executive Officer with the U.S. Navy Blue Angels, the hallmark of Navy and Marine Corps teamwork and professionalism.

He is a 2000 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, where he lettered in football and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics. He received his Master of Business Administration from the Naval Postgraduate School and is a graduate of the Air Command and Staff College. Jon is honored to serve in a variety of organizations in a leadership capacity, including serving as an Advisory Board Member of USO Florida, a Director with the Blue Angels Association, and an active member of the Navy Football Brotherhood. Jon lives with his wife, Amy, and their three children in Gulf Breeze, Florida.

Governor Ron DeSantis appointed Jon to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2025.



Will Rodriguez

Over the last twenty years Will has been directly involved in state and local government. Will began his service by working on city council and state house races in Miami-Dade County. Starting as a Legislative Aide to freshmen House members and ultimately serving as Senior Advisor to the current Speaker of the Florida House, Will has seen the inner workings of the political process at the highest levels and everything in between. As a legislative aide Will became intimately familiar with the infrastructure of the political process in the state capitol. By learning the committee and budget process at the granular level Will was able to provide his members the most accurate and relevant information that led to many policy successes during his tenure.

Later in his career Will led the finance and fundraising efforts during the 2014-16 cycle for the Republican Party of Florida's House Campaigns division, successfully raising millions of dollars for the election and re-election campaigns of all Florida House Republicans. The 2016-2018 cycle saw Will heading the entire political operation of the House Campaigns team under Speaker Oliva's leadership. While continuing to raise millions of dollars towards the election and re-election campaigns of all House Republicans, Will and his team also managed the recruitment and retainment efforts for the operation by working closely with dozens of campaign consultants, polling firms and individual candidates to ensure the best possible re-election environment.

Most recently, Will served as Senior Advisor to the current Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives. In that capacity Will managed the intersection where politics and policy inevitably meet, helping the chamber lead to what many believe was one of the most successful sessions in recent history. Will lives in Tallahassee, Florida with his three children, BreeAnne, Liam and JonLuke.

Governor Ron DeSantis appointed Jon to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2025.

Appointed by the Senate President



Garrett Richter, Vice Chair

Garrett Richter is the Florida Market President of First Foundation Bank. He previously served as the founder, President, CEO and director of First Florida Integrity Bank, and the President and a director of TGR Financial, Inc., the bank's holding company.

His banking career began at Mellon Bank in February 1969. His employment with Mellon Bank was interrupted when he entered the Army in November 1969. He was awarded a Bronze Star, the Combat Infantry Badge and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry while serving in Vietnam with the 75th Ranger Company from 1970-71.

Garrett was elected to the Florida Legislature in 2006. He served one term in the Florida House of Representatives, followed by two terms in the Florida Senate where he was the President Pro Tempore from 2012 to 2016. During his tenure in the Florida Senate, he chaired the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee, the Senate Gaming Committee and the Ethics and Elections Committee. Garrett served as the chairman of the Florida Defense Support Task Force from 2015-2016, working to protect and enhance Florida's military missions and installations.

He is the past chairman of the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce and is an alumnus and past Board of Regents member of Leadership Florida, and past chairman of Leadership Collier. He served as director of FHLBank Atlanta from 2019 – 2021. Garrett was previously appointed to the Florida Ethics Commission by then Governor Rick Scott.

He is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh and the Graduate School of Banking in Madison, Wisconsin. Garrett has been married to Diana for 49 years and has three children and six grandchildren.

Senate President Kathleen Passidomo appointed Garrett to the Veterans Florida Board in 2023.



Angela Drzewiecki

Angela Drzewiecki is a senior government affairs advisor at GrayRobinson, where she brings more than a decade of experience in government relations. She has successfully advocated for municipalities, trade associations, non-profits, and businesses before Florida's executive and legislative branches. Angela focuses her practice on a myriad of issues, including local government matters, transportation, public safety, and legislative appropriations.

Angela attended Florida State University where she earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science as well as a Master's degree in Applied American Politics and Policy.

As a Gold Star family member and military spouse, Angela brings a unique perspective and valuable insight to the Veterans Florida Board.

Angela was appointed to the Veterans Florida Board in 2019 and Senate President Kathleen Passidomo reappointed her in 2023.



Lynda L. Weatherman

Lynda L. Weatherman currently serves as President and CEO of the Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast. She is responsible for attracting new business and the retention of existing industry throughout the Space Coast. Previously, Weatherman held leadership posts with the Florida Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis, Gainesville Chamber of Commerce, and Marion County Economic Development Agency. In 2010, she was selected to be a member of the Air Force Chief of Staff Civic Leader Program, serving as an advisor, key communicator, and advocate for the Air Force and providing ideas and feedback to the Secretary of the Air Force and Air

Force Chief of Staff.

Lynda was appointed to the Veterans Florida Board in 2019 and Senate President Kathleen Passidomo reappointed her in 2023.



Senator Jay Collins

Jarrid “Jay” Collins is a highly-decorated Army Special Forces combat veteran and Purple Heart recipient with over two decades of service including five years as an active duty Green Beret following the amputation of his leg. Adopted and raised by his grandparents, Collins spent his early years on his family’s farm.

Collins would start college before enlisting in the Army, following in the footsteps of his WWII veteran adoptive father. While attending Airborne School, our nation was attacked on 9/11. This inspired Collins to attend Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS). He was selected to become a Special Force Medic, rescuing a hypothermic classmate in the middle of an ice storm, and earned the leadership award at his Special Forces Graduation. As a Green Beret, Collins deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, and twice to South America. In his 2007 Afghanistan deployment, Collins was hit in the arm, continued fighting, and later helped perform surgery on himself in the field of battle. Staying in country, he returned to full combat operations after just 30 days of recovery. A few months later, he sustained injuries that would eventually lead to the amputation of his leg years later. Collins overcame his chronic injuries to be selected for US Army Special Operations Command, but ultimately had to have his leg amputated due to the severity of his condition. Following his amputation, Collins requalified as a fully deployable Green Beret and served over five more years on active duty.

Following 23 years of service, Collins took a position with a nonprofit, overseeing the distribution of millions of meals to veterans, first responders, and those in need. He was elected to the Florida Senate in 2022 for a six-year term. Collins is married to his wife of 21 years Layla, a retired veteran with 20 years of service herself, and a father to two young sons, Gabe and Colt. Having chosen Tampa as the place they would raise their family, proud Floridians Jay and Layla are dedicated to serving their community.

Senate President Ben Albritton appointed Jay to the Veterans Florida Board in 2024.

Appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives



Robert M. Kirila

Robert Kirila is the founder and Managing Director of Black Powder Partners, a private equity firm that works with the nation's top veteran executives to grow construction service companies. Previously Robert served as the CEO and Executive Director for Special Operators Transition Foundation, with a focus on providing Special Operators the support needed to find careers in the private sector. Robert was also the Chief Operating Officer for DEFENSEWERX and guided the growth of disruptive innovation practices at Air Force bases around the nation.

For 26+ years, Robert served as a Special Forces Officer in the United States Army. During that time Robert commanded Special Operations Forces on four continents in peacetime and combat and developed a unique portfolio of experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan that culminated as the senior Special Operations advisor to the Commanding General in the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

Robert holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of Richmond and Master's degrees from Central Michigan University and the United States Army War College. Among his awards are the Legion of Merit, Distinguished Service Medals, the Bronze Star, and the Green Beret authorized by President John F. Kennedy. Robert lives with his wife Chrissie in Valparaiso, FL.

Robert was appointed to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2018, and Speaker Chris Sprowls reappointed him in 2022.



Jerry L. Neff, Treasurer

Brigadier General (Retired) Jerry L. Neff enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 1960 before transferring to the Florida Army National Guard and graduating from the Florida National Guard Officer Candidate School in 1964.

When General Neff retired in June 1999, he was the Deputy Commanding General, 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command in Orlando.

General Neff's numerous decorations and awards include the Legion of Merit, The Meritorious Service Medal, and Army Commendation Medal (with oak leaf cluster).

General Neff was a banker for 47 years and retired in 2009 as President of M&I Bank, Florida Region. He then served for two years as the Chairman of M & I Bank Advisory Board, Florida Region.

General Neff graduated from Excelsior College with a Bachelor of Science degree in liberal arts and the U.S. Army War College. General Neff is married to the former Judy Evans and resides in Bradenton.

General Neff was appointed to the Board of Directors in 2018, and Speaker Chris Sprowls reappointed him in 2022.



Alan J. Suskey

Alan Suskey is the managing partner at Shumaker Advisors' Tallahassee practice.

Alan previously served on Capitol Hill as the military aide to Congressman Bill Young, former Chairman of the Appropriations Committee and Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense in the United States House of Representatives. Alan's primary focus was on defense, intelligence, and homeland security projects in the Chairman's district of Pinellas County.

Prior to serving on Capitol Hill, Alan served honorably in the United States Army. During his eight years of service, he held multiple leadership posts that include leading our brave men and women during Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was a member of the initial invasion force in Iraq and subsequently served in several leadership roles training various first responders throughout his career. The recipient of multiple awards for service to our country, including eight Army Commendation Medals and the Valorous Unit Award, Alan was honored as the United States Army Europe "Soldier of the Year" in 2002.

Speaker Chris Sprowls appointed Alan to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2022.



Representative Daniel Alvarez

Elected to the Florida House in 2022, Danny Alvarez is an attorney and business consultant with experience in corporate communications, marketing and messaging management. Alvarez serves as General Counsel for the Tampa Police Benevolent Association, the Union representing over 1,100 active, reserve and retired members of the Tampa Police Department. He also helps businesses of all sizes navigate day-to-day operational, legal and marketing issues with a concentration on business growth and increased sales. Alvarez taught Business Law at the University of Tampa for almost nine years and is regularly requested by media outlets in English and in Spanish to provide insight on legal and business matters.

After receiving the prestigious Distinguished Military Graduate designation, Danny was commissioned as an infantry officer in the United States Army in 1997. He is a graduate of the Infantry Officers Basic Course, the Bradley Fighting Vehicle Leaders Course, the Basic Airborne Course and the Jump Master Course. He was a performing member of the Silver Wings, the Army's first and oldest parachute demonstration and skydiving team. After six years of combined service, he departed the Army in 2001 as a Captain having successfully led hundreds of men and women while maintaining responsibility for millions of dollars in vehicles, equipment and gear.

Alvarez was awarded the prestigious Hispanic Man of the Year by Tampa Hispanic Heritage Incorporated and was also named The Tampa Bay Community Service Person of the Year by Al Gallon Ministries in 2015. He is a three-time Tampa Bay Business Journal Heroes At Work award winner (2014, 2016 and 2017) and in 2012 was named the Small Business of the Year by the

Tampa Latin Chamber of Commerce.

Speaker Daniel Perez appointed Danny to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2025.

Committees of the Board

The Board of Directors maintains two standing committees to advise the Board on oversight and direction to the corporation.

Budget and
Finance
Committee

Programs and
Outreach
Committee

Meet The Team



Joe Marino, Executive Director – United States Military Academy Graduate, U.S. Army Veteran

The Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors and works in partnership with the Board to shape and advance the organization’s mission, philosophy, and annual goals. In collaboration with the Board and staff, the Executive Director develops and implements policies, procedures, and long-term strategic plans. The Executive Director oversees all administrative, financial, and programmatic operations, as well as personnel matters—including organizational structure, hiring, training, and performance evaluations. The Executive Director is responsible for managing the implementation of Veterans Florida’s VETS Program, including Career Services, Workforce Training Grant, Entrepreneurship, and Agriculture Programs, and the Department of War SkillBridge internship program, as well as building and maintaining the strategic partnerships necessary to implement the Programs. Joe currently serves on the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors.

Jeremy Sinnemaki, Deputy Executive Director - U.S. Air Force Retired

The Deputy Executive Director supports the Executive Director in advancing the organization’s mission, philosophy, and goals, working closely with both the Executive Director and Board of Directors. This role assists in the development and implementation of policies, procedures, and long-term strategic plans, and helps oversee the organization’s administrative, financial, and programmatic operations. The Deputy Executive Director also supports outreach efforts and helps maintain key relationships with partners and stakeholders to strengthen collaboration and advance the organization’s mission. Additionally, the Deputy Director supports the execution of Veterans Florida’s VETS Program. The Deputy Executive Director reports to the Executive Director.

Heather Collins, Director of Finance and Operational Support – Military in Family

The Director of Finance and Operational Support is a key member of the executive team, responsible for overseeing financial management, procurement, contract administration, and human resources at Veterans Florida. The Director of Finance and Operational Support ensures compliance with state regulations, as Veterans Florida receives direct funding from the State of Florida, as well as with the requirements of any additional funding sources. In addition to financial oversight, the Director provides critical operational support to the executive team by contributing to organizational planning, decision-making, and cross-functional coordination. The Director of Finance and Operational Support also plays a central role in planning and executing the annual

Veterans Florida Expo, which includes a career and resource fair, entrepreneur pitch competition, and educational workshops for servicemembers, veterans, and their families. Furthermore, the Director manages logistics for board meetings and other key events, and provides strategic and administrative support to the executive team as needed. The Director of Finance and Operational Support reports to the Executive Director.

Sheila Helton, Senior Grants Manager – Military in Family

The Senior Grants Manager is responsible for the contract and grant administration of Veterans Florida grant programs under the VETS Program and other programs; Workforce Training Grant and Entrepreneurship Program. As part of the administration team, the Senior Grants Manager is responsible for drafting contracts and memoranda of understanding, ensuring contract compliance, collecting and reporting information to grant recipients, maintaining data, processing grant payment authorizations, compiling metrics and reporting for stakeholders and funders, and assists the executive team when necessary. The Senior Grants Manager reports to the Director of Finance and Operational Support.

Consuela Hall, Senior Operations Support Specialist – Military in Family

The Senior Operations Support Specialist is responsible for general operation of the office, performing administrative duties including arranging travel, preparing travel/expense authorizations, event planning, and providing administrative and technology support. The Senior Operations Support Specialist provides administrative support to the Executive Director, Director of Administration, Board of Directors, and the Veterans Florida team in general. The Senior Operations Support Specialist reports to the Director of Finance and Operational Support.

Kolby Livingston, Senior VETS Manager - SkillBridge Specialty - U.S. Army Veteran

Derrick Fraser, VETS Manager - Entrepreneur Specialty - U.S. Navy Veteran

Keith Gerena, VETS Manager - Agriculture Specialty - U.S. Marine Veteran

Philip Lewis, VETS Manager - Workforce Specialty - U.S. Army Reservist, U.S. Navy Veteran

Ben Motes, VETS Manager - SkillBridge Specialty - U.S. Air Force Veteran

The VETS Manager identifies and engages Florida employers, entrepreneur training partners, and other organizations to hire or train servicemembers, veterans, and spouses. The VETS Manager works with targeted, high-wage Florida industries to identify career opportunities for the target audience, and provides SkillBridge, career matching, and training opportunities for them with Florida partners. The VETS Manager conducts outreach activities and represents Veterans Florida at career fairs, conferences, or other events attended by the target audience or prospective training partners. The VETS Manager provides individual assistance to veterans and servicemembers transitioning out of the Armed Forces living in or desiring to move to Florida. The VETS Manager assists with resume creation, interview preparation, career guidance and referrals to other resources. The VETS Manager reports to the Executive Director.

Reggie Warner, Senior VETS Specialist - U.S. Army Veteran

The VETS Specialist provides individual assistance to the target audience living in or desiring to move to Florida. The VETS Specialist assists with matching veterans to program services, resume instruction, interview preparation, career guidance and referrals to other resources. The VETS

Specialist is training to become a VETS Manager. In addition, the VETS Specialist attends events, such as career/resource fairs and conferences to recruit and educate veterans. The VETS Specialist reports to the Executive Director.

Morgan Wentworth, VETS Coordinator - U.S. Air Force Veteran

Tayron Davis, VETS Coordinator - U.S. Army Veteran

The VETS Coordinator provides initial individual assistance to veterans and servicemembers transitioning out of the Armed Forces and living in or desiring to move to Florida. The VETS Coordinator assists with matching veterans to program services, resume instruction, interview preparation, career guidance and referrals to other resources. In addition, the VETS Coordinator attends events, such as career/resource fairs and conferences to recruit and educate veterans. The VETS Coordinator reports to the Executive Director.



Veterans Florida continues to receive recognition from the Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Services as a gold medallion award recipient. The HIRE Vets Medallion Award recognizes employers who have employed and retained veterans, including their efforts to establish employee development programs for veterans, and employers who offer veteran-specific benefits to improve retention.

Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) Program (s. 295.22, F.S.)

Florida SkillBridge Initiative

The DOD SkillBridge program provides transitioning servicemembers, with commander approval during their last six months of military service, the opportunity to gain hands-on experience with civilian employers. Participants sharpen critical industry skills, receive specialized training, and maintain their military pay and benefits while preparing for civilian careers. The program reduces the employment gap between military separation and civilian life while offering employers access to a highly skilled, mission ready talent pool at reduced training costs. Through the Florida SkillBridge Initiative, Veterans Florida strengthens this national program by creating a sustainable job pipeline that encourages servicemembers to transition, relocate, and establish long-term careers in Florida.

SkillBridge Program FY 2024-24	
Fiscal Year	Trained
FY 2020-21	1
FY 2021-22	35
FY 2022-23	96
FY 2023-24	88
FY 2024-25	43
Total	263



In 2020, Veterans Florida became an authorized DOD SkillBridge provider with our Agriculture Program in partnership with the University of Florida. In 2021, Veterans Florida became the first statewide organization in the nation to become an authorized SkillBridge provider and Governor DeSantis signed a law which designated Veterans Florida as the state's principal organization for the SkillBridge initiative. Veterans Florida continues to expand the program working with more than 100 employers, private businesses and state government agencies to offer SkillBridge. This past year 43 servicemembers completed SkillBridge training while 16 were still in training at the end of the fiscal year.

Workforce and Career Services

To better serve the needs of veteran and spouse job seekers and employers, under the Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) Program Veterans Florida provides Workforce and Career Services. These services include the Veterans Florida Workforce Training Grant, which

reimburses eligible companies in targeted industries 50 percent of the training cost for every new or existing veteran employee trained, up to \$8,000 per employee.

The Workforce Training Grant supports employers in Florida's targeted industries by providing resources to hire, retain, and upskill veterans. Through this initiative, veterans build upon the competencies developed during military service, gaining technical skills that are marketable, practical, and transferable to civilian careers.

The VETS Team partners with employers statewide to translate military experience into relevant civilian job qualifications, ensuring veterans' skills and accomplishments are effectively recognized in the hiring process. In addition, the team delivers targeted guidance and training to employers and human resource professionals, highlighting the value, adaptability, and leadership veterans contribute to Florida's workforce.

The Career Services Program enables Veterans Florida to actively connect qualified veterans with employment opportunities across a statewide network of Florida employers. Veterans can register at veteransflorida.org to access personalized assistance and career support. Through this program, the VETS Team engages directly with every veteran who contacts Veterans Florida, providing comprehensive employment services including resume development, interview preparation, career matching, and guidance on additional resources that support long-term success in the civilian workforce. The VETS Team annually attends at least thirty career and resource fairs in-state and out of state, two in-state airshows, the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, and several on-base activities sharing Florida's opportunities with veterans and servicemembers.



For FY 2024-25, Veterans Florida received over 300 applications as a result of a partnership with the University of Florida in the VETS-HASTE Program (Veterans Hardware Security Training and Education), which will provide industry-driven courses and hands-on learning to ten Florida veterans. The training started in May 2025 and will conclude in November 2025. Selected veteran participants will receive a \$10,000 stipend and \$2,500 for travel from the University. This partnership is a three-year endeavor and will result in 30 veterans trained and ready for careers in hardware security.



Workforce Grant Reimbursements FY 2016-25		
Fiscal Year	Trained	Reimbursements
FY 2015-16	1	\$2,520
FY 2016-17	117	\$476,070
FY 2017-18	187	\$687,483
FY 2018-19	303	\$712,765
FY 2019-20	393	\$1,112,985
FY 2020-21	237	\$862,129
FY 2021-22	118	\$406,269
FY 2022-23	197	\$918,750
FY 2023-24	239	\$688,479
FY 2024-25	253	\$565,200
Total	2,045	\$6,412,650

Agriculture Program

AGVets Program	
Fiscal Year	Trained
FY 2020-21	10
FY 2021-22	18
FY 2022-23	6
FY 2023-24	not a program year
FY 2024-25	8 in training at end of fiscal year
Total	34

For federal fiscal years 2024–27, Veterans Florida was awarded a new three-year grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) AgVets Program, totaling \$772,349, to continue expanding the Veterans Florida AGVets Program and build upon the success of its initial pilot and first award cycle. The renewed National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) funding supports the next phase of the program through Fiscal Year 2026–27, ensuring continued access to high-quality agricultural training and career pathways for veterans across Florida.

The program’s ongoing objective is to prepare veterans for leadership roles within Florida’s nearly \$200 billion agriculture and kindred industries by providing hands-on, science-based education

and employment support. Through a strong partnership with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), Veterans Florida will expand its training capacity and strengthen relationships with UF/IFAS Research and Education Centers (RECs) statewide. Building on the prior success of the first AgVets award, which trained 34 veterans through 2023, this renewal will further enhance program reach, refine training modules, and increase placement opportunities in agriculture-related employment, entrepreneurship, and continuing education programs. Through this grant, Veterans Florida continues its commitment to empowering veterans to lead and grow Florida's agricultural future.



The Veterans Florida AGVets Program delivers a six-month, hands-on fellowship designed to equip veterans and transitioning servicemembers with the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to thrive in Florida's agriculture sector. Training is conducted at UF/IFAS RECs, where participants engage directly with ongoing research in food safety, crop science, sustainability, and plant disease resistance. Each REC provides a structured rotation plan that immerses veterans in key aspects of agricultural operations, including trial planning, field preparation, crop management, data collection, and harvesting. Participants earn educational stipends through the USDA AgVets funding, supporting their transition into agribusiness careers, entrepreneurial ventures, or academic advancement in agriculture-related fields. Following training, Veterans Florida assists program participants in advancing their careers within the agriculture industry, whether by securing employment at an agribusiness, working farm, or ranch, or by pursuing entrepreneurship training to establish their own farm or agribusiness using the skills and experience gained through the programs.

Entrepreneurship Program

Florida is home to the third-largest population of veteran-owned businesses in the nation, collectively generating over \$57.7 billion in annual sales. Veterans also pursue self-employment at a higher rate than their civilian counterparts. The Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program supports these business leaders by providing targeted training, mentorship, networking, and facilitation, meeting veterans wherever they are in their entrepreneurial journey and equipping them with the tools needed to succeed.

The Entrepreneurship Program conducted its tenth year of operation in Fiscal Year 2024-25. Since the inception of the program in early 2016, the program has served 7,768 veterans and spouses across the state.

The program offers a range of opportunities designed to meet the unique needs of veteran entrepreneurs, emphasizing tailored training over generalized information. Participants can engage in cohort-based courses, interactive workshops, networking events, and coworking

sessions, providing flexible pathways to develop skills, build connections, and advance their businesses at their own pace.

Cohort-based training provides multiple training modules to a small group of prescreened participants in a facilitated discussion environment over the course of several weeks. Cohorts are designed to help veteran entrepreneurs with starting their business, or growing their business after startup. These cohorts delve deeply into all aspects of entrepreneurship and are hosted by one of our entrepreneur partners. Cohort attendance is reserved for a maximum of 15 veterans. Acceptance into this portion of the program is managed by the partners.



Workshops provide veteran entrepreneurs with topical general business training to groups of participants of any size over the course of a few hours. Training in general business topics such as legal structures, stakeholders, launching, marketing, franchising, acquisitions, and other issues that business owners frequently face. Workshops are open to all interested veteran entrepreneurs and are hosted by our entrepreneur partners.

Networking events provide veteran entrepreneurs opportunities to network and connect with peers and resources. Networking offers entrepreneurs personal growth, developing professional connections and building a sense of community. Networking events are conducted by our entrepreneur partners and provide veterans interested in entrepreneurship the ability to learn about program opportunities, network with peers, and connect with resources to assist them on their entrepreneurial journey. Networking events are open to all interested veterans, mentors, entrepreneurs, and community business leaders.

Entrepreneurship Program Partners FY 2024-25

 <p>WEST CENTER STATE COLLEGE OF FLORIDA</p> <p>Bradenton and Sarasota</p>	 <p>ACTIONZONE</p> <p>Tampa</p>	 <p>ALAN B. LEVAN NSU BROWARD CENTER OF INNOVATION</p> <p>Fort Lauderdale</p>
 <p>beachworx</p> <p>Destin and Fort Walton Beach</p>	 <p>FAVOB FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF VETERAN OWNED BUSINESSES</p> <p>Jacksonville, Orlando, Panhandle, Space Coast and Tampa</p>	 <p>FAU</p> <p>Boca Raton</p>
 <p>FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY</p> <p>Fort Myers</p>	 <p>FIU FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY</p> <p>Miami</p>	 <p>JULO STRATEGY GLOBAL</p> <p>Miami and Panhandle</p>
 <p>SWFL inc.</p> <p>Bonita Springs</p>	 <p>SPARKING A CHANGE FOR VETERANS EMPOWERING HEROES. BUILDING FUTURES.</p> <p>Pensacola</p>	 <p>SPC St. Petersburg College</p> <p>St. Petersburg</p>
 <p>VALOR2VENTURE SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED</p> <p>Jacksonville</p>	 <p>VETERANS VEI ENTREPRENEURSHIP INITIATIVE MMXIII</p> <p>Orlando</p>	

Entrepreneur Program Participants					
Fiscal Year	Served*	Cohort Trained	Fiscal Year	Served*	Cohort Trained
FY 2015-16	424	167	FY 2020-21	525	262
FY 2016-17	300	147	FY 2021-22	989	132
FY 2017-18	393	82	FY 2022-23	1,614	173
FY 2018-19	426	96	FY 2023-24	1,368	244
FY 2019-20	304	108	FY 2024-25	1,425	250
			Total	7,768	1,661

* Served includes veteran participation in any program element offered in the Entrepreneurship Program including workshops and networking.

Marketing Program

The Veterans Florida marketing and communications campaign supports the organization’s primary goals; Career Assistance, SkillBridge placements, Entrepreneurship Training and promotes Florida’s status as the nation’s top state for veterans, transitioning servicemembers, and their families. The target audience is servicemembers, veterans and spouses in the 24 months leading up to separation from the military and 36 months following separation. The marketing team produces all content and executes all advertising for the Veterans Florida Expo each year in coordination with the team.

The marketing team collaborates closely with VISIT FLORIDA to implement an annual marketing campaign highlighting the state’s natural beauty. Through this partnership, VISIT FLORIDA directs veterans and servicemembers to the Veterans



Florida website, creating a seamless pathway for engagement. The effectiveness of this strategy is demonstrated by increased audience size, higher engagement rates, and significant growth in targeted industries and demographics. Key channels driving inbound leads include LinkedIn and email campaigns, complemented by social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter/X, and Instagram, all of which experienced measurable growth during the fiscal year.

The marketing team creates content that spotlights servicemember and veteran successes as well as career opportunities in Florida's targeted industries. Articles and social media posts are among the highest-performing content, contributing to earned media coverage in major target markets. In addition, the team promotes sponsored events, engaging veterans, servicemembers, employers, and economic development partners. These efforts raise awareness of Florida's veteran support initiatives, provide direct access to resources, and increase statewide visibility of career and entrepreneurial opportunities.



In 2023, Veterans Florida partnered with Legendary LTD of Tarpon Springs, FL to design and produce t-shirts for marketing/promotional use during the year. Later we partnered with them to produce and sell shirts to support our mission and activities with "Living the Dream" and "Land of the Free"; 50% of the proceeds are donated to Veterans Florida.

The 2025 Veterans Florida Expo was held June 6 and 7 at the Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore. The two-day event connects servicemembers, veterans and their families with SkillBridge, career and entrepreneurship opportunities and resources in Florida. Attendees can network with other

veterans, hear success stories, meet with veteran friendly employers, and watch Florida's top veteran entrepreneurs in the Battle of the Pitches competition. Throughout both days, the CareerSource Florida Expo Floor hosted numerous partners, providing access to federal and Florida benefits. For the first time ever, the Floor was open to allow our pitch competitors the opportunity to showcase their product or service and share their entrepreneurial journey. Expo featured employers and exhibitors, speakers, 12 pitch competitors in the Battle of the Pitches, professional headshots, personal consultations with agencies providing direct services, and over 250 registered attendees. Expo sponsors included Boeing, CareerSource Florida, CareSource Florida, and Florida SBDC. Veterans Florida hosted the 10th Anniversary Reception and recognized former board members and Bobby Carbonell, Veterans Florida's first Executive Director.



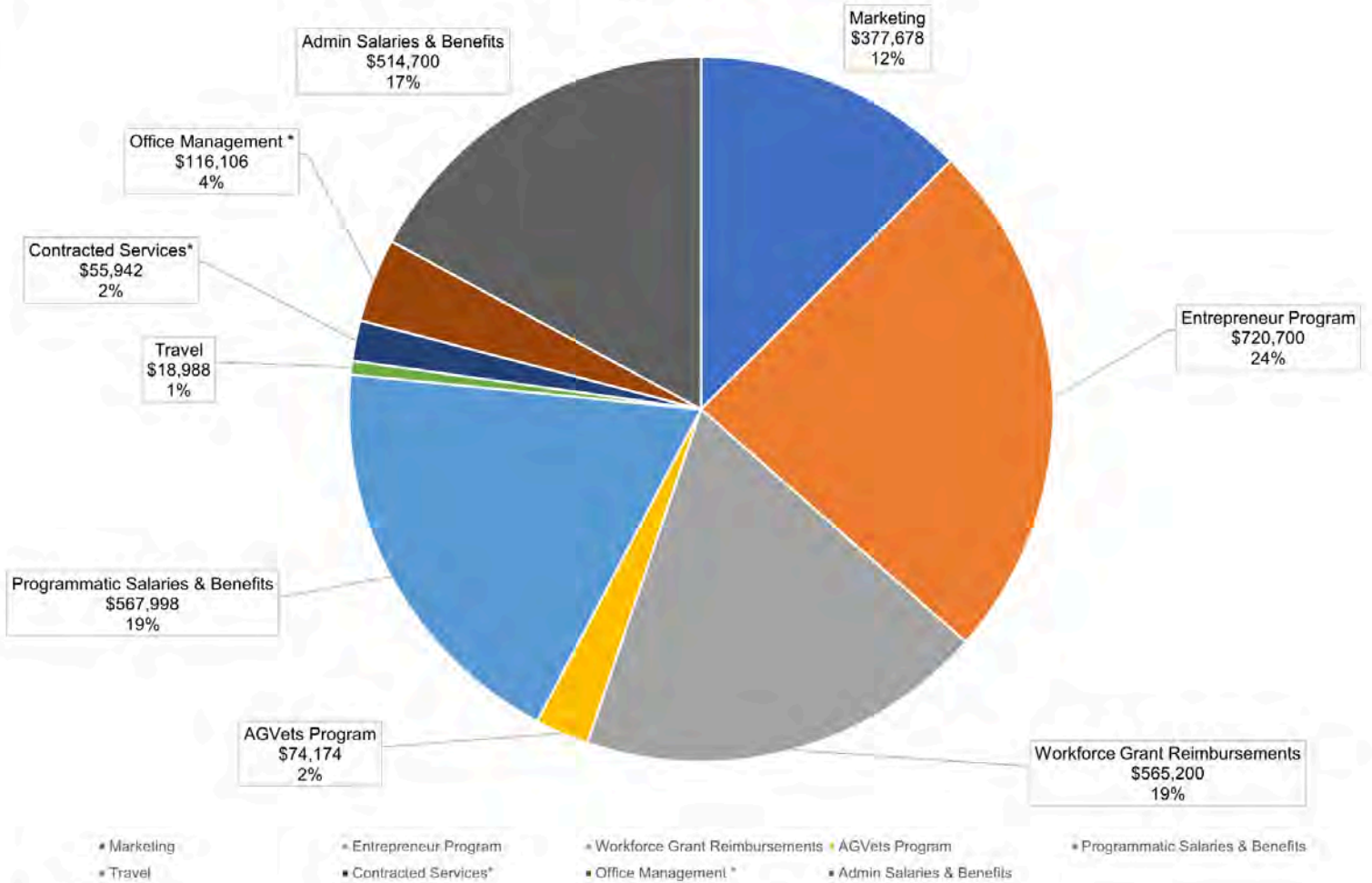
The Expo pitch competitors were Entrepreneur Program participants that completed a partner cohort. Veterans Florida awarded \$17,500 from privately raised funds to the following veteran-owned business: Casa Buni awarded \$10,000; Sage & Lore Counseling awarded \$5,000; and Tech Driven Consulting awarded \$2,500. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive from attendees, sponsors, and exhibitors.

Marketing Metrics FY 24-25				
Channel	Followers	New	Post Views	Engage Rate %
Website	684,000			
LinkedIn	10,708	1,640	140,529	8.5
Facebook	78,458	1,076	101,816	3.3
Instagram	1,716	321	23,677	9.4
Twitter	934	5	27,120	8.5
YouTube	773	85	1,699	
Newsletter	29,448	5,281		

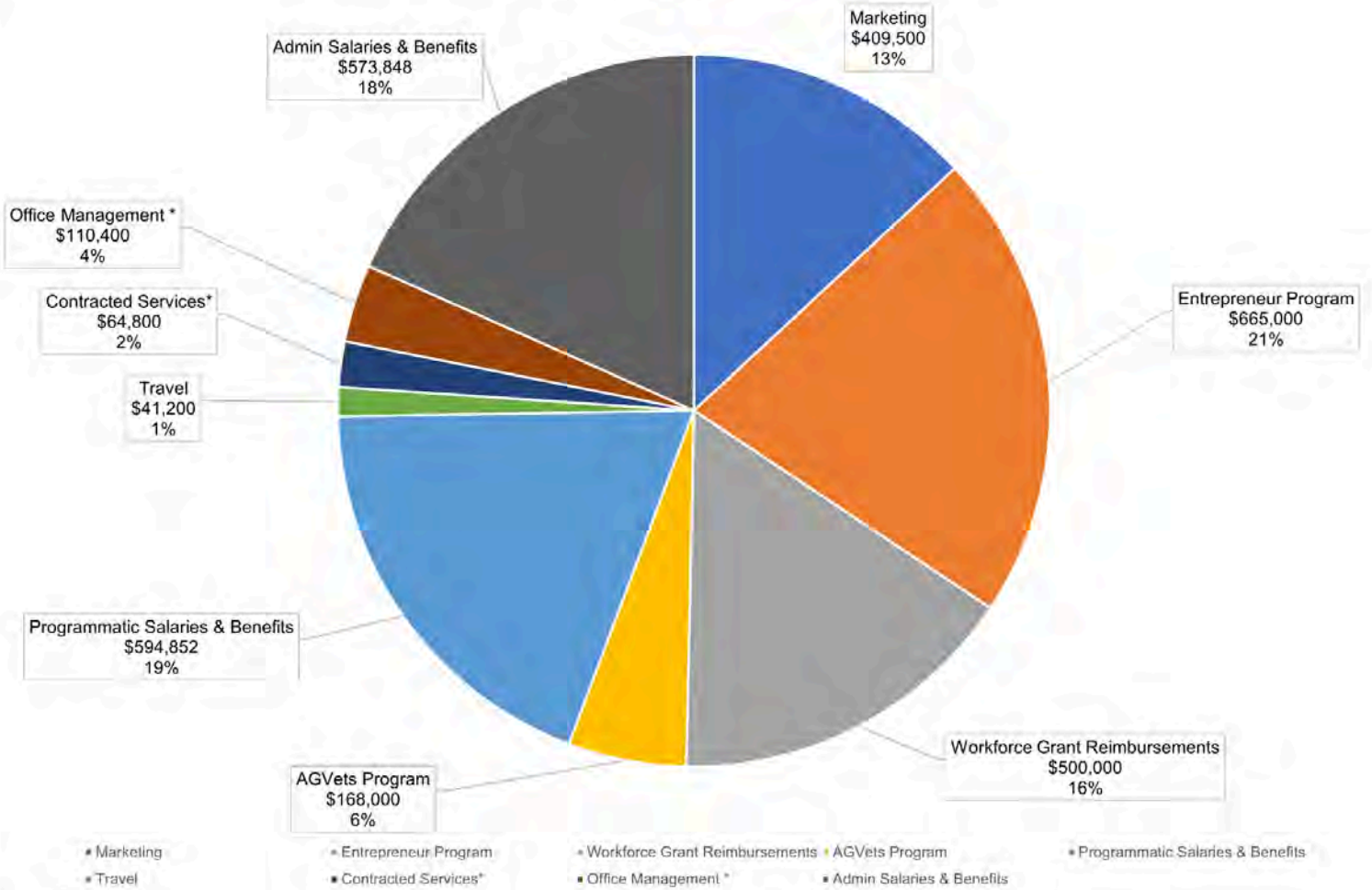
Financial Summary

Veterans Florida derives revenue from many sources, with the primary funder being the State of Florida.

FY 2024-25 Expenses



FY 2025-26 Budget



*Programmatic Salaries & Benefits includes salaries and benefits of employees providing direct services to servicemembers, veterans and their families. Office Management includes operational expenses such as office supplies and equipment, lease of office space, software, phone and internet services, dues/subscriptions, postage/shipping, office maintenance, and printing. Contracted Services such as business insurance, accounting, auditing services, HR/Payroll, legal services, IT support, and bank services support the organization’s internal operations.

Contracts FY 2024-2025

The corporation entered into the following contracts to carry out its duties.

Contracts				
Date Entered	Contractor	Service Provided	Amount	Date Completed
July 12, 2021	930 TVR, LLC	Office Lease	\$184,372	Aug 31, 2024
Aug 19, 2024	Apogee Signs, Inc	Office Signage	\$769	Sept 30, 2024
Feb 17, 2025	BowStern Marketing Communications	Graphic Design Support	\$1,575	April 30, 2025
Aug 16, 2024	Capital IT, LLC	Equipment Relocation	\$1,523	Oct 10, 2024
Dec 13, 2024	Carr, Riggs & Ingram	Auditing & Form 990 Tax Preparation	\$15,600	Dec 31, 2025
June 27, 2024	Central Groves Corporation	Office Lease	\$307,420	Aug 31, 2029
Oct 1, 2024	Diversity Group & Associates	Agriculture Program Quarterly Audits	\$67,614	Oct 31, 2027
July 19, 2024	DocuSign	eSignature Software	\$4,914	July 18, 2025
Nov 14, 2024	Green Savoree St. Petersburg, LLC	Sponsorship of Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg	\$50,000	March 2, 2025

Contracts				
Feb 13, 2025	Hilton Garden Inn Tallahassee	Meeting Space	\$300	March 13, 2025
Oct 3, 2024	Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore	Expo Venue	\$20,000	June 7, 2025
Aug 1, 2024	Morale, Welfare and Recreation Fund at NAS Jacksonville	2024 NAS Jacksonville Air Show	\$20,000	Oct 20, 2024
Aug 1, 2024	Morale, Welfare and Recreation Fund at NAS Pensacola	2024 NAS Pensacola Blue Angels Homecoming Air Show Sponsor	\$25,000	Nov 2, 2024
July 31, 2024	Myrick Moving Company	Office Move	\$4,693	Aug 27, 2024
July 19, 2024	RecruitMilitary	Marketing and Career Fair Participation	\$25,995	June 30, 2025
April 23, 2025	Silver Productions	Expo Video Production	\$5,750	June 30, 2025
Aug 20, 2024	Two Men and A Truck	Furniture Assembly	\$765	Aug 21, 2025
Aug 13, 2024	Uline	Office Furniture	\$11,567	Aug 20, 2025
Sept 4, 2024	Ultimate Corporate Advertising	2024 USA Today Veterans Affairs Insertion - ½ page advertisement	\$5,000	Nov 12, 2024

Contracts				
Feb 21, 2025	Veterans Entrepreneurship Initiative, Inc	Sponsorship	\$1,500	May 15, 2025
July 17, 2024	Viqtory	Military Friendly State Guide August 2024 Ad	\$3,898	August 31, 2024

Development

The Veterans Florida team actively pursues additional public and private funding to supplement State of Florida supported programs. Sponsors may designate contributions to the VETS Program, specific events such as the annual Veterans Florida Expo, or general operations that advance the organization’s mission. These development efforts are driven by a proactive approach to building and maintaining donor relationships, keeping supporters engaged, and providing measurable insights into the impact of their contributions. Based on overwhelmingly positive feedback and consistent upward trends, Veterans Florida anticipates continued growth in sponsorship and funding, generating greater outcomes for veterans transitioning to civilian life and enhancing the organization’s economic impact across the state.



Awards/Sponsorships			
Organization	Amount	Type	Purpose
USDA/National Institute of Food and Agriculture	\$257,450	Grant	2024-2027 AGVets Program
AirBnB	\$50,000	Donation	Organizational Support
Boeing	\$40,000	Grant	VETS Program
University of Florida	\$15,000	Grant	HASTE Program
Boeing	\$10,000	Sponsorship	Expo Sponsor
Career Source Florida	\$5,000	Sponsorship	Expo Sponsor

Awards/Sponsorships			
CareSource Florida	\$5,000	Sponsorship	Expo Sponsor
Florida SBDC Network State Office	\$2,000	Sponsorship	Expo Sponsor
Other Supporters	\$275	Donation	General Mission
Legendary LTD	\$331	Shirt Sales	General Mission
Total FY 2024-25	\$385,056		

Outlook

The outlook is bright for those served by Veterans Florida. Our services are gaining greater awareness among the target audience of separating and retiring servicemembers, veterans, members of the Guard and Reserves, and spouses. In addition to implementing ways to better reach the target audience and provide more partners for SkillBridge, career, and entrepreneur partners, we secured recurring funding for these services ensuring that the 200,000 separating servicemembers across the country and 1.4 million veterans in Florida will always be able to reach out for direct assistance and training or referral to a state agency partner.

Veterans Florida continues to work with The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs and their third-party vendor to develop and implement an occupational license reciprocity system (Specific Appropriation 607, Chapter 2024-231, Laws of Florida) for veterans and spouses moving to Florida with professional licenses. The selected vendor will coordinate work efforts with Veterans Florida and the portal will be housed on the Veterans Florida website.

Veterans Florida secured a \$116,429 enhancement to the existing AGVets program in September 2025. This new component, called AGCerts, was awarded by the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences to support the AG Vets program. The AGCerts program is designed to cover the cost of industry-recognized certifications for veterans, with the goal of assisting 40 veterans over the next two years.

The VETS-HASTE program is a three-year collaboration between Veterans Florida and the University of Florida. Its first cohort successfully completed training in November 2024. Veterans Florida recruited the second cohort, which started in May 2025. Each cohort consists of ten Florida-based veterans who are provided with comprehensive support, including a \$10,000 stipend and \$2,500 for travel and lodging. The program includes both virtual instruction and a week of practical, hands-on training held at the UF campus in Gainesville, along with opportunities for sector-specific internships.

During the 2025 Expo, Veterans Florida launched the Next Mission Florida Transition Seminar. This seminar is designed to showcase the array of services, benefits, and quality of life advantages that Florida offers to military members and their families. To continue this important work, Veterans Florida is committed to expanding Next Mission Florida, with plans to host an additional 2-3 seminars in fiscal year 2025-26, providing more opportunities for servicemembers, veterans, and spouses to attend.

Equipped and guided by our strategic plan, our enhanced scope of work contained in 2024 House Bill 1329, and recurring funding secured for the VETS Program, Veterans Florida continues to build on the successes from 2024-25 state funding and explore additional private funding partners that support our programs and services.

The unwavering support from the State of Florida, those who served, statewide partners, and industry leaders push us each day to connect those who served with our powerful career and entrepreneurship tools, training, and resources that make Florida the nation's most veteran-friendly state.

