

Jul 22, 2026

ENT RFQ Webinar

Summary

The meeting outlined the updated Veterans Florida entrepreneur program structure, eligibility standards, and procurement submission guidelines.

Program structure and eligibility

Florida based entities may apply for the entrepreneur program using a fee based model. Qualified organizations demonstrate dedicated administrative staffing to support program delivery.

Cohort and event requirements

Launch and growth cohorts focus on specific business stages with updated instructional requirements. Attendance includes 4 workshops and 4 networking events to support veteran entrepreneurs.

Procurement and submission guidelines

Proposals require a single PDF document submission by 5:00 p.m. on August 14. The program transitioned to a fixed fee payment structure, replacing reimbursement models for all components.

Decisions

Aligned

- **Launch and Getting Started cohorts combined** The Launch and Getting Started cohorts are combined into a single, faster-paced 11-module program to replace the previous model.

- **Procurement process set as fee-based** The procurement method is established as a fee-based process rather than a reimbursement model.
- **Hybrid cohort training requirements defined** Hybrid cohorts are required to conduct at least three of the eleven training modules in-person.
- **Financial penalties for attendance defined** Veterans Florida will withhold 20% of the total fee for failing to meet minimum attendance requirements.
- **Participant fees prohibited for sponsored events** Partners are prohibited from charging participants for attending Veterans Florida-funded workshops or networking events.
- **Growth cohort admission criteria established** Admission to the Growth cohort is determined by partners based on the participant's substantive revenue generation status.
- **Recruitment for statewide virtual cohorts defined** Veterans Florida will assume responsibility for managing recruitment and screening for statewide virtual cohorts.

We've **updated the Decisions section** using your feedback.

Let us know what you think: [Helpful](#) or [Not Helpful](#)

Next steps

- ☐ [Potential partners] Submit Questions: Submit questions regarding the request for qualifications in writing to the email address entrepreneur at veteransf.org by the end of the day on Friday.
- ☐ [Potential partners] Submit Proposals: Submit proposal documents as a single PDF file to the email address entrepreneur at veteransf.org by 5:00 pm on August 14th.
- ☐ [Veterans Florida] Post Recording: Publish the recorded meeting video on the official website.

- ☐ [Veterans Florida] Post Responses: Post the responses to submitted questions on the website by the end of the day on July 31st.
- ☐ [Veterans Florida] Confirm Receipt: Notify potential partners regarding the receipt of their proposal within 2 business days of submission.

Details

- **Meeting Introduction and Agenda:** Heather Collins opened the meeting, welcoming participants and providing instructions to mute microphones and use the chat feature for questions. The session is being recorded and will be posted on the Veterans Florida website. The meeting agenda includes an introduction of the Veterans Florida team, a review of the procurement method, program goals, scope of work, payment terms, evaluation criteria, and submission timelines.
- **Veterans Florida Team and Program Overview:** Heather Collins introduced the team, including Joe Marino (Executive Director), Jeremy Cineaki (Deputy Executive Director), Heather Collins (Director of Finance and Operational Support), Roy Bolivar (Director of the Veteran Entrepreneur Opportunity), and Sheila Helton (Director of Grants Management). Joe Marino noted that the program is starting fresh this fiscal year, with key updates including the combination of "modeling" and "getting started" cohorts to create a faster-paced Launch cohort and the introduction of statewide virtual cohorts to serve veterans located far from physical partners. Troy Bolivar was introduced as a new team member and key contributor to the program's updated structure.
- **Procurement Method and Eligibility:** Heather Collins clarified that the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process is a fee-based model rather than a reimbursement model. Partners may submit proposals for one or all parts of the program, such as networking events or workshops. To be eligible, entities must be Florida-based, such as universities, colleges, or nonprofits, and must have paid staff or contractors dedicated to the administration of the program.
- **Program Goals and Objectives:** The primary objective is to serve as a pipeline for veterans, service members, spouses, and members of the Guard and Reserve to take business ideas from conception through execution and

scalability. The program aims to help entrepreneurs validate their business ideas and gain necessary skills and confidence without incurring unnecessary financial risk.

- **Launch Cohort Details:** The Launch cohort, which replaces the previous "modeling" and "getting started" components, focuses on testing business model canvases and risk assumptions. The cohort consists of 11 modules, each lasting two to three hours, for 10 to 15 participants. Partners are encouraged to include guest speakers and mentorship opportunities. At the end of the program, participants must produce a business canvas, which the partner must evaluate for viability and marketability.
- **Growth Cohort Details:** The Growth cohort is designed for entrepreneurs in the growth or expansion phase who are already generating revenue and registered on Sunbiz with the state of Florida. This cohort requires six to eight participants, with a minimum of six, and includes eight modules of two to three hours of instruction. Partners must evaluate the participant's business for scalability and provide mentorship and resources.
- **Participant Eligibility and Verification:** Partners are responsible for vetting participants to ensure they are Florida residents, discharged veterans (with other than bad conduct or dishonorable discharge), active duty service members stationed in Florida, or spouses/unmarried former spouses of veterans or service members. Entrepreneurs must operate for-profit businesses. Partners must collect specific documentation, including tax IDs, and ensure that any deviations from these requirements are approved by Veterans Florida.
- **Reporting Requirements:** For reporting purposes, partners must collect new data points, including military branch, separation data, and rank or grade at separation. Additionally, partners must track detailed attendance, document marketing efforts, collect photos for promotional use, obtain completed canvases from participants, and administer a standardized Veterans Florida survey at the end of the training.
- **Workshops and Networking Events:** Workshops and networking events are standalone offerings open to all interested veterans, service members, and spouses, regardless of whether they have participated in a cohort. Partners must host a minimum of four workshops and four networking events between September 1 and June 2027. Workshops require a minimum of 10 attendees and

should cover business-related topics, while networking events also require 10 attendees to facilitate peer connection and resource sharing.

- **Marketing and Branding Guidelines:** All marketing efforts for cohorts, workshops, and networking events must be co-branded with the Veterans Florida logo. Partners are required to use the formal name "Veterans Florida Entrepreneur Program" and are encouraged to tag the organization on social media platforms like LinkedIn to enable resharing.
- **Payment Terms and Financial Consequences:** The program utilizes a fixed-fee structure rather than reimbursement. Cohort partners may invoice 50% of the fee upon the start of the cohort, provided attendance is reported, with the remaining balance paid upon completion. Workshops and networking events are invoiced upon completion. Veterans Florida may impose a 20% financial consequence for failure to meet minimum attendance requirements.
- **Proposal Submission Guidelines:** Proposals must be submitted as a single PDF document to entrepreneur@veteransf.org by 5:00 p.m. on August 14th. The proposal must be a maximum of 10 pages, excluding the required letter of authorization, executive summary, and letters of support. All questions must be submitted in writing by the coming Friday, and responses will be posted on the website by July 31st.
- **Q&A: Participant Logistics and Flexibility:** Joe Marino clarified that workshop and networking participants do not need to be tied to a specific cohort, as these events are open to all veterans exploring entrepreneurship. Regarding the choice between Launch and Growth cohorts, partners have the flexibility to make decisions based on the participant's revenue generation and readiness, though generally, participants without substantive revenue should begin with the Launch cohort. Partners also have the flexibility to determine the scheduling of cohorts, such as utilizing weekends, provided the total required instructional hours are met.
- **Q&A: Virtual Cohort Management:** Local virtual cohorts are intended for participants within a specific region, while statewide virtual cohorts serve those in areas without local coverage. Veterans Florida will manage the recruiting process for statewide virtual cohorts, acting as a "goalie" to ensure participants are directed to the most appropriate training format. Exceptions to the in-person cohort requirement, such as during emergencies, must be

pre-approved by Veterans Florida, as the intent is for in-person cohorts to be facilitated on-site.

- **Closing Remarks and Blackout Period:** Heather Collins reminded participants of a "blackout period" from the RFQ issuance to the final contracting phase, during which no communication regarding program opportunities or questions is permitted outside of the formal, written Q&A process. Questions will be addressed on the website, and partners should not call staff directly.

You should review Gemini's notes to make sure they're accurate. [Get tips and learn how Gemini takes notes](#)

*How is the quality of **these specific notes**? [Take a short survey](#) to let us know your feedback, including how helpful the notes were for your needs.*