



Your Pursuit • Our Power

Annual Report 2022





Table of Contents

Introduction from the Chair	
Board of Directors	1
Meet The Team	6
Veterans Employment and Training Services Program	10
Financial Summary	19
Outlook	24

TO: Governor Ron DeSantis,
Senator Kathleen Passidomo, President of the Senate, and
Representative Paul Renner, Speaker of the House of Representatives

December 1, 2022

It is my distinct privilege to submit Veterans Florida's annual report for Fiscal Year 2021-22, which marks the seventh full year of operation for our organization. Our mission is to attract and retain veterans to our great state and to make Florida their permanent residence.

This year we began implementing 2021 House Bill 435, establishing the nation's first statewide SkillBridge initiative and designating Veterans Florida as the state's principal Department of Defense SkillBridge awareness and assistance organization. The Florida SkillBridge Initiative creates unprecedented opportunities for transitioning servicemembers across the country to come to Florida, builds a highly skilled talent pipeline for employers, and firmly plants Florida's flag as the top destination for military families.

Our nationwide, veteran-focused marketing campaign brought more than 93,000 unique and returning visitors to our website and provided veterans with information on the benefits and opportunities available in Florida. The campaign's reach demonstrated growth through increases in social media followers and email newsletter subscribers, and attracted over 2,600 veterans seeking career assistance and job placement.

The Veterans Florida Workforce Training Grant program remains popular and we have contracted with over 90 businesses that have hired/trained more than 1,300 veterans. These veterans collectively have earned over \$55 million in salary which flows back into Florida's economy.

Since the inception of the Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program in early 2016, it has received 4,827 applications from veterans across the state, served 3,361 veterans and provided assistance to 504 veteran owned businesses.

The Board of Directors and staff of Veterans Florida take pride in accomplishing this important mission in a transparent and cost-effective manner, always remembering that we are entrusted with the taxpayer's dollars. I'm proud of what we have accomplished so far and very excited for the future of this program to serve, attract, and train veterans to make Florida their home.

Sincerely,



Warren R. McPherson

Chair, Veterans Florida Board of Directors

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

Board of Directors

Appointed by the Governor



Warren R. “Rocky” McPherson, Chair

Rocky McPherson retired after serving for 10 years as the Vice President, Military and Defense programs, Enterprise Florida, Inc.—a public/private agency responsible for economic development initiatives in Florida. Rocky previously served five years as the Executive Director at Florida Department of Veterans Affairs. Rocky served on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans and families.

Rocky is a Vietnam veteran who served in combat, both as an Infantry Officer and carrier based Naval Aviator flying the A6E. Rocky held key leadership roles during his Marine career as the Deputy Director, Marine Personnel Management Division; Chief of Staff, III Marine Expeditionary Force, and as a Group Commander, Marine Aviation Training Group, NAS Whidbey Island.

Rocky is a 1966 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, and holds a Master of Political Science degree from Auburn University. Rocky is also a graduate of the National War College in Washington, DC. He was named to the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame, Class of 2015. Rocky and his wife, Connie, reside in Yulee, Florida.

Governor Rick Scott appointed Rocky to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2017, and Governor Ron DeSantis reappointed him in 2022.



James Sampey

After serving 23 years at Cox Target Media, including roles as President of Valpak and Executive Vice President at Cox Target Media, Jim Sampey founded CIHU (Can I Help You?), LLC, in retirement, helping friends and business associates take their businesses to the next level. Jim is engaged as Founder, Advisor and/or Investor to several organizations including Live Water Sports, Prime Medical Apparel, and SKUx.io. Jim serves on various Advisory Boards including SunTrust Bank, and Jim Moran School of Entrepreneurship at Florida

State University.

Governor Rick Scott appointed Jim to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2014.



Mark Harden

Mark Harden served in the U.S. Navy for thirty years and retired as a Chief of Naval Operations Directed Master Chief. Mark also retired after fifteen years as Director of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society in Pensacola, FL. His passion is working on programs that support Veterans and Active Duty military personnel and their families.

Actively engaged in the community in various capacities, Mark is the current National Judge Advocate for Navy League of the United States, is an officer of the Executive Committee and is on the Board of Directors. He co-founded and chairs the Pensacola Veteran Support Organization Network which is a clearinghouse of over 40 veteran support organizations that work together to solve local veteran and military needs. Mark is a graduate of the Leadership Pensacola program where he has held a variety of leadership posts including Chairman and President of the Alumni Association. Mark is currently a Rotarian and has served on the Board of Directors, and completed 3 years as their Program Chair.

Governor Rick Scott appointed Mark to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2017, and Governor Ron DeSantis reappointed him in 2022.

Appointed by the Senate President



Tom Rice, Treasurer

Tom Rice is the owner of The Magnolia Grill of Ft. Walton Beach, which he and his wife, Peggy, opened in 1996. In 2004, the Magnolia Grill received Florida's Good Neighbor Award from the National Restaurant Association and was the Greater Ft. Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce's Small Business of the Year. In 2007, Congressman Jeff Miller recognized Tom and Peggy for humanitarian work in the Congressional Record of the 110th Congress. Tom serves on numerous Boards, including being Chairman of the Community

Advisory Board of the Salvation Army of Okaloosa and Walton County, Florida. He serves as Secretary of Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida and Chairs the Veterans Tribute Tower Committee. He is a member of the board of directors of the Air Force Enlisted Village (Bob Hope Village) and its assisted living facility, The Hawthorne House since 2015. Tom was named to the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame, Class of 2017.

Tom is a veteran and retired as First Sgt. from the U.S. Army. Former Senate President Don Gaetz appointed him to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2014 and Senate President Bill Galvano reappointed him in 2019.



Angela Drzewiecki

Angela Drzewiecki is a consultant at GrayRobinson, where she brings over 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 of government. 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. Senate President Bill Galvano appointed Angela to the Veterans Florida Board in 2019.



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 Brevard County, Florida. Lynda earned a master's degree in economic development from the University of Southern Mississippi which resulted in the award of a Rotarian Fellowship to the University of Hong Kong where, in 1990, she completed a second master's degree in international and urban planning.

In 2007, Lynda was honored with the NASA Distinguished Public Service Medal, the highest honor NASA awards to both government and non-government employees. 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. In 2011, Lynda was awarded "Professional of the Year" by the Florida Economic Development Council recognizing excellence among economic development practitioners throughout the state of Florida.

Senate President Bill Galvano appointed Lynda to the Veterans Florida Board in 2019.

Appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives



Martin Steele, Vice Chair

Lieutenant General Martin R. Steele enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1965 and rose from private to three-star general, culminating his military career as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, Policies, and Operations at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, in Washington, DC in 1999. A decorated combat veteran, he is a recognized expert in the integration of all elements of national power (diplomatic, economic, informational, and military) with strategic military war plans and has served as an executive strategic planner/policy director in multiple theaters across Asia. General Steele's extraordinary career was chronicled as one of three principles in the award-winning military biography *Boys of '67* by Charles Jones.

Upon retiring from active duty in 1999, General Steele was the Chairman and CEO of Steele Partners, Inc., a strategic advisory and leadership consulting company and holds leadership positions in a number of non-profit organizations aimed at assisting transitioning veterans.

Speaker Will Weatherford appointed General Steele to the Board of Directors in 2014.



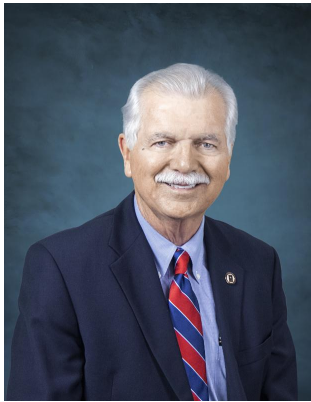
Robert M. Kirila

Robert Kirila is currently a partner at Black Powder Holdings, a private capital group, and is the Managing Director at the Kirila Group, a mergers and acquisition search firm. Robert serves on the Board of Directors for Special Operators Transition Foundation and is on the board of advisors for Stampede Consulting and VetCV.

Serving as a Senior Leader in the last seven years of Robert's 26 year career in the U.S. Army, he developed a unique portfolio of experience including stints leading Special Operators in Iraq and Afghanistan and advising the Commanding General in the fight against ISIS.

Robert holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of Richmond and Master's degrees from Central Michigan University and the National 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 and two children in Valparaiso.

Speaker Richard Corcoran appointed Robert to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2018, and Speaker Chris Spowls reappointed him in 2022.



Jerry L. Neff

Brigadier General (Retired) Jerry L. Neff enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard 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, Orlando, Florida.

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, and then served for two years as Chairman of M & I Bank Advisory Board.

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, Florida.

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

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 collaboratively with the Board to provide direction and leadership to the formulation and achievement of the organization's philosophy, mission, and its annual goals and objectives. Additionally, the Executive Director works with the Board and staff to develop and implement policies, procedures, and long-range strategic plans, and oversees administrative, financial and program operations, and all personnel matters such as the staff organizational structure, hiring, training, and performance evaluations.

Jeremy Sinnemaki, Veterans Employment and Training Services Director – U.S. Air Force Retired

The Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) Director is part of the executive team and responsible for the overall implementation of Veterans Florida's programs, including Career Services, Workforce Training Grant, Entrepreneurship Program, Agriculture Program, and Department of Defense SkillBridge internship program. The VETS Director is responsible for recruiting Florida businesses interested in hiring, retaining, and training veterans. The VETS Director works with targeted Florida industries to identify career options for veterans, assisting in providing career matching of veterans with employers, or internship opportunities for active duty servicemembers or veterans. Additionally, the VETS Director leads the Entrepreneurship Program, which includes multiple partners delivering entrepreneurship curriculum and resources to veterans. The VETS Director implements and maintains technology solutions that support the various programs and manages the Partner Development Manager and Veterans Services Specialists. The VETS Director reports to the Executive Director.

Heather Collins, Director of Administration – Military in Family

The Director of Administration is part of the executive team and responsible for financial management, contract management, and human resources at Veterans Florida. The Director of Administration ensures compliance with the state of Florida as a direct funding source. Additionally, the Director of Administration supervises the organization of board meetings and other events, and assists the executive team where necessary. The Director of Administration reports to the Executive Director.

Dan Barrow, Communications and Marketing Director – Military Supporter

The Communications and Marketing Director is part of the executive team and responsible for planning, developing, and implementing Veterans Florida's marketing strategies, overseeing communications and public relations activities, both external and internal. The Communications and Marketing Director promotes Florida's veteran-friendly reputation to servicemembers and veterans, promotes veteran-friendly employers, and continues brand awareness with elected officials, Florida employers and the general public. Additionally, the Communications and Marketing Director is responsible for oversight of Veterans Florida Annual Expo, a career/resource fair, entrepreneur pitch competition, and workshops/discussions targeting servicemembers, veterans, and their families. The Communications and Marketing Director reports to the Executive Director.

Amy Dudley, Partner Development Manager – U.S. Navy Veteran

The Partner Development Manager is responsible for outreach efforts to businesses throughout Florida, fostering positive working relationships to maintain and enhance resources and opportunities for veterans and servicemembers. Additionally, the Partner Development Manager is responsible for conducting outreach activities to encourage Florida employers to hire and train veterans through Veterans Florida Career Services, meets with employers, and initiates the application process for the Workforce Training Grant. The Partner Development Manager is responsible for coordinating, maintaining, and managing partner contracts, which includes multiple, geographically diverse partners delivering the entrepreneur curriculum and resources to veterans for the Entrepreneurship Program. The Partner Development Manager serves as the Agriculture Program Manager responsible for coordinating and administering the Veteran Agriculture Program funded by the USDA. The Partner Development Manager reports to the VETS Director.

Sheila Helton, Grants Manager – Military in Family

The Grants Manager is responsible for the administration and management of Veterans Florida grant programs under the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program (VETS). As part of the administration team, the Grants Manager is responsible for drafting contracts, ensuring contract compliance, collecting and reporting information to grant recipients, maintaining data, compiling metrics and reporting for stakeholders and funders, and assists the executive team when necessary. The Grants Manager reports to the Director of Administration.

Danielle Ochoa, Information Technology Manager – Military in Family

The Information Technology (IT) Manager is responsible for planning, implementing, and maintaining Veterans Florida's online web presence, software implementation, hardware procurement and installation, and providing technology support and updates. The IT Manager reports to the Director of Administration and supports all program teams at Veterans Florida.

Consuela Wilson, Office and Board Manager – Military Supporter

The Office and Board Manager is responsible for general operation of the office, performing administrative duties including arranging staff and board member travel, preparing travel/expense authorizations, event planning, and providing administrative support. The Office and Board Manager provides administrative support to the Executive Director, Director of Administration, Board of Directors, and the Veterans Florida team in general. The Office and Board Manager reports to the Director of Administration.

Kolby Livingston, Veterans Services Specialist – U.S. Army Veteran

The Veterans Services Specialist provides individual assistance to veterans and servicemembers transitioning out of the Armed Forces and 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. 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 VETS Director.

Andrea Marteeny, Veterans Services Specialist – U.S. Navy Veteran

The Veterans Services Specialist provides individual assistance to veterans and servicemembers transitioning out of the Armed Forces and 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. 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 VETS Director.

Derrick Fraser, Veterans Services Specialist – U.S. Navy Veteran

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Keshia Valverde, Veterans Services Coordinator - U.S. Navy Veteran

The Veterans Services Coordinator provides 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. The VETS Coordinator reports to the VETS Director.

Casey Speers, Social Media and Content Specialist – Military in Family

The Social Media and Content Specialist is responsible for executing marketing strategies to various audiences which may include: generating, optimizing, and publishing content for digital and print marketing. The Specialist ensures all content respects the organization's brand voice and style guidelines by working closely with the Program staff to promote Veterans Florida services to veterans, transitioning service members, and Florida employers. The Social Media and Content Specialist reports to the Communications and Marketing Director.

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

Workforce and Career Services

To better serve the needs of veteran job seekers and employers, Veterans Florida maintains 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 provides resources to Florida's targeted industry employers to hire, retain, and train veterans to augment their skill set developed during military service. The Veterans Florida workforce team actively works with employers to translate military experience into comparable civilian experience requirements. The team educates employers and their human resources teams on the value and capabilities veterans bring to the workforce.

The Career Services Program allows Veterans Florida to actively recruit qualified veterans to fill positions at a network of Florida employers. Veterans can register at veteransflorida.org for assistance. Veterans Services Specialists or Coordinators reach out to every veteran who contacts Veterans Florida to provide employment services such as resume assistance, interview preparation, career matching, and counsel veterans on additional resources available to them.

During FY 2021-22, a total of 2,668 veterans in Florida and from across the nation were served seeking career assistance or job placement in Florida. Over 90 employers used Veterans Florida Workforce or Career Services this year.

Workforce Grant Reimbursements FY 2021-22		
Fiscal Year	Veterans Trained	Workforce Grant Reimbursements
FY 2015-16	1	\$2,520
FY 2016-17	117	\$476,070
FY 2017-18	187	\$687,483

Workforce Grant Reimbursements FY 2021-22		
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
Total	1,356	\$4,260,221

Workforce Veteran Training Grant Program began January 2016 after receiving initial funding from the State

Florida SkillBridge Initiative

The DOD SkillBridge program allows transitioning servicemembers, with commander approval during their last six months of military service, the opportunity to work for a civilian employer to sharpen critical industry skills and obtain specialized training, while retaining their full military pay and benefits and help ease their military separation into their new civilian career. In fiscal year 2020, Veterans Florida became an authorized DOD SkillBridge provider with our Agriculture Program in partnership with the University of Florida.



In 2021, Governor DeSantis signed a new law to create the nation's first statewide SkillBridge Initiative and designating Veterans Florida as the principal organization to execute the initiative. In fiscal year 2022, Veterans Florida continued to expand the program working with more than 100 employers. This past year 35 servicemembers

completed SkillBridge training and 32 servicemembers are actively participating in a SkillBridge opportunity.

SkillBridge Program			
Fiscal Year	Applications Received	Participants Served	Participants Completed
FY 2020-21	48	16	1
FY 2021-22	68	67	35
Total	116	83	36

Agriculture Program

For fiscal years 2020-23, Veterans Florida received a \$745,245.00 prime award from the United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) FY20 Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans Competitive Grants Program to expand the Veterans Florida Agriculture Program building on the success of the 18-month



Pilot Program (Sept 2018 - Feb 2020). Our objective for the NIFA award is for thirty (30) veterans to complete the program. Veterans Florida is exceeding the program's milestones with support from the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS). Most of the veterans who complete the Agriculture Program are placed into agriculture related employment, are starting their own farms, or furthering their education in an agriculture related degree. Additionally, we strengthened our outreach and developed relationships with thirteen (13) of the UF/IFAS Research and Education Centers (RECs) and demonstration sites around the state.

The Veterans Florida Agriculture Program is a six-month training fellowship that provides veterans and servicemembers a comprehensive, hands-on experience and equips them with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be competitive for leading careers in Florida's \$149 Billion agriculture industry. The hands-on training takes place at the UF/IFAS RECs in Florida, where cutting edge research and innovations in food safety, crop production, and disease-resistant plants have played a vital role in advancing the industry. Each research center develops a structured rotation plan to introduce veterans to different production methods and challenges such as trial planning, field/site preparations, preparing plant materials, trial maintenance, data collection, harvesting, and various cropping activities depending on season, crop, and individual research program needs. Veterans in this program earn a \$15 per hour stipend through the USDA NIFA funding. Veterans Florida works with program participants to further their career at an agribusiness or working farm or ranch after completing the training.

Agriculture Program				
Fiscal Year	Applications	Participants	Completions	Placements
Pilot Program FY 2018-20	87	54	8	9
FY 2020-21	24	12	10	11
FY 2021-22	44	38	25	28
Total FY 2020-22	68	50	35	39

Entrepreneurship Program

One in four active duty servicemembers and veterans want to open and operate their own business. Opportunity, freedom, and challenge attract them to business ownership. The Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program offers veterans on-site and virtual training, facilitation, and mentorship designed to meet the veteran where they are in their entrepreneurial journey.

The Entrepreneurship Program conducted its seventh year of operation in Fiscal Year 2021-22. Since the inception of the program in early 2016, the program has received more than 4,800 applications from veterans across the state and served 3,361 veterans.



The program features several opportunities to meet the needs of veteran entrepreneurs at different stages of their entrepreneurial journey. This approach favors tailored training over information overload. Veterans can participate in cohort-based training, workshops, networking or coworking.

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 one of our entrepreneur partners.

Networking events provide veteran entrepreneurs opportunities to network with peers and connect with 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 veteran entrepreneurs, mentors, entrepreneurs and community business leaders.

Coworking space provides veteran entrepreneurs with shared office space and access to local resources. Partners offering coworking space may provide unlimited or near unlimited 24/7 access to office space, desk (private preferred), member-only events and workshops, conference room access, discounted venue rental, mailing and business address, access to mentorship from local business leaders and professional consultants, and Lean Startup based exposure.

Entrepreneurship Program Partners FY 2021-22		
 Tampa	 Boca Raton	 Fort Myers
 Orlando	 Melbourne	 Orlando, Tampa, Melbourne

Entrepreneurship Program Partners FY 2021-22

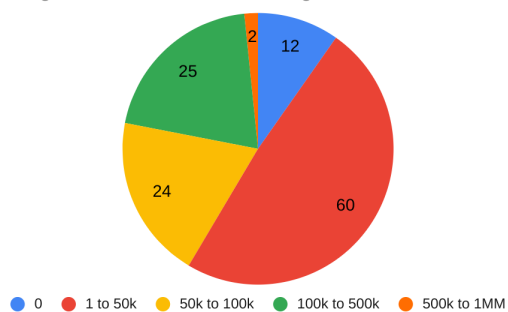
 Tampa	 Pensacola	 Pensacola
 Tallahassee	 Tampa	

Entrepreneur Program Participants Cumulative Reported Data 2016-2021

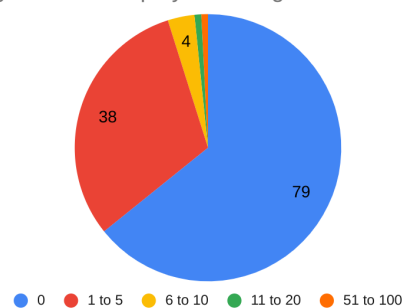
Revenue Generated	Capital Invested	Businesses	Hires
\$124,206,298	\$27,949,341	504	744

Entrepreneur Program Participants Survey Respondents FY 2020-21 through FY 2021-22

Average Annual Revenue Range



Average Annual Employees Range



Low Range Total: \$4,760,000

Low Range Total: 124

High Range Total: \$19,900,000

High Range Total: 350

Starting in 2022 we asked respondents to report ranges for revenue and employees for improved capture of metrics; this table reflects response values after completing Startup or Growth training; charts show counts of businesses reporting within the survey ranges.

Entrepreneur Program Participants			
Fiscal Year	Applications Received	Participants Served	Training Completions
FY 2015-16	612	424	167
FY 2016-17	458	300	147
FY 2017-18	787	393	82
FY 2018-19	910	426	96
FY 2019-20	449	304	108
FY 2020-21	601	525	262
FY 2021-22	1,010	989	132
Total FY 2015-22	4,827	3,361	994

Marketing Program

The Veterans Florida marketing and communications campaign supports the organization's primary goals: Career Assistance; Entrepreneurship Training; and promoting Florida's status as the nation's top state for veterans, transitioning servicemembers, and their families. The marketing team also produces all content and executes all advertising for the Veterans Florida Expo each year in coordination with the administration and VETS teams. The target audience is servicemembers and veterans in the 12 months leading up to and following separation from the military.



The marketing team works closely with VISIT FLORIDA to carry out the annual marketing campaign. The marketing focus has shifted in recent years from high-volume web traffic to longer-form

storytelling content, with a specific priority placed on LinkedIn. The success of that strategy is born out not only in engagement and audience size, but significant growth in targeted industries and demographics. Along with LinkedIn, email campaigns are primary drivers of inbound leads and Veterans Florida consistently outperforms competitors and industry averages in key metrics such as engagement and open rates. Other channels include public relations, traditional print advertising, radio, and paid search through Google's \$10,000 per month AdGrants program.

The in-house writing team produces regular content around monthly themes highlighting our participants' success and opportunities in targeted Florida industries. These blog posts are among the highest-performing content pieces, and have contributed to earned media coverage in major target markets. These articles were published in the first edition of the "Pursuit Meets Power" magazine that is distributed at events and promoted on our website. The marketing team executes topical webinars with veterans, servicemembers, and economic development partners to promote our programs, answer questions, and increase visibility of Florida's veterans support initiatives.

The marketing team has full web development, video production, and creative capabilities, allowing Veterans Florida to operate with the flexibility to quickly capitalize on opportunities and maximize our reach and impact. The team built our website, handles all public relations, and creates all of the content distributed on social media and the web.

The 2022 Veterans Florida Expo returned to an in-person format on June 17 and 18, 2022 for the first time since 2019. The two day event featured 274 total attendees, 37 employers, 15 exhibitors, 28 speakers, and 14 pitch competitors in the first ever statewide Battle of the Pitches. Andrews Nautical won gold and received \$10,000, ClieTell took silver and won \$5,000, and MatchMyPlace won \$2,500 for bronze. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive from attendees, sponsors, and exhibitors.

Marketing Metrics				
	FY 20-21	FY 21-22	% Change	Notes
Total Unique Website Visitors	73,183	93,419	27.65%	
Total Facebook Page Likes	80,858	79,317	-1.91%	Standard Facebook Scrub of Inactive Accounts
Email Newsletter Subscribers	34,996	33,725	-3.63%	Scrubbed Inactive Users
LinkedIn Followers	4,931	7,004	42.04%	Result of Prioritizing LinkedIn

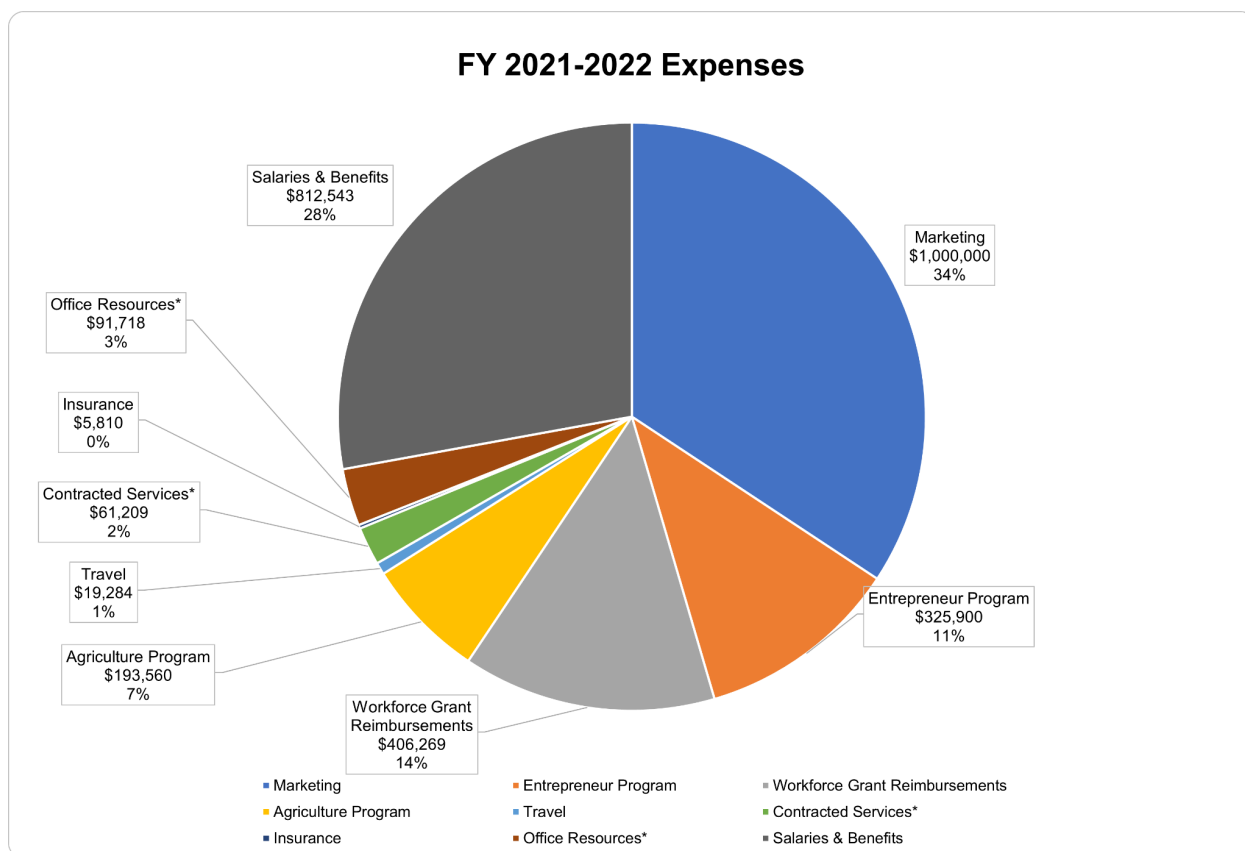
Marketing Metrics				
Twitter Followers	702	785	11.82%	

Annual Web Traffic

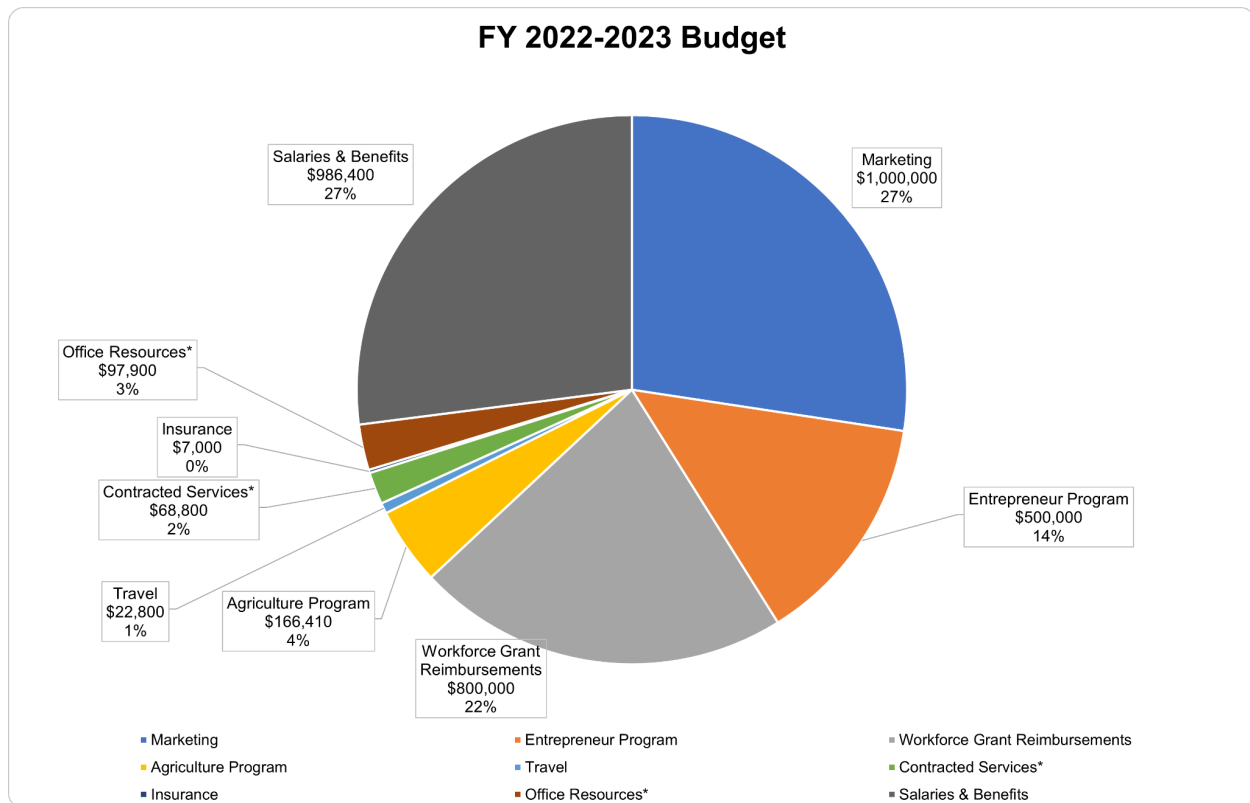


Financial Summary

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



*Office Resources include operational expenses such as office supplies and equipment, lease of office space, software, telecommunication services, printing, and postage. Contracted Services such as accounting, auditing services, HR/Payroll, legal services, and website development and management help support the organization's internal operations.



Contracts FY 2021-2022

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

Contracts				
Date Entered	Contractor	Service Provided	Amount	Date Completed
March 17, 2021	Orlando Hilton	Expo 2022 Venue	\$10,000	June 30, 2022
June 30, 2021	Florida Veterans Foundation	Florida Veterans Benefits Guide Advertising	\$5,000	December 31, 2021
July 12, 2021	930 TVR, LLC	Office Lease	\$184,372	August 31, 2024
August 19, 2021	RecruitMilitary	Job Fair Registrations	\$8,955	June 7, 2022
September 21, 2021	Diversity Group & Associates	Agriculture Program Quarterly Audits	\$18,195	October 31, 2022
November 9, 2021	DocuSign	eSignature Software	\$1,594	November 8, 2022

Contracts				
November 9, 2021	Hotel Duval	Board Meeting Venue	\$250	November 30, 2021
March 10, 2022	Silver Productions	Video Production	\$7,550	June 30, 2022
June 29, 2022	Carr, Riggs & Ingram	Auditing & Form 990 Tax Preparation	\$12,375	December 31, 2022

Development

The Veterans Florida team works diligently to raise additional public and private funds to augment State of Florida funded programs. Sponsors may choose to target funds specifically to the VETS program, events such as our annual Expo, or for general operations to support the Veterans Florida mission. Our successful development efforts are a direct result of our proactive approach to forging relationships with donors, keeping them engaged, and providing measurable insights into the impact of their support. Given the overwhelmingly positive feedback from existing and potential sponsors and upward trends, we are confident the future will yield even greater outcomes for veterans returning to civilian life and for our economic impact within the state of Florida.

Awards/Sponsorships			
Organization	Amount	Type	Purpose
Regions Bank	\$4,000	Grant	VETS Services
USDA - AGVETS Program (Year two of three)	\$249,696	Grant	Agriculture Program
Bank of America	\$20,000	Sponsorship	Expo Sponsor
Boeing	\$10,000	Sponsorship	Expo Sponsor
Career Source Florida	\$10,000	Sponsorship	Expo Sponsor
Florida Association of Veteran Owned Businesses	\$3,000	Sponsorship	Expo Sponsor

Awards/Sponsorships			
Hillsborough Community College	\$3,000	Sponsorship	Expo Sponsor
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University FAMU	\$1,000	Exhibitor	Expo Exhibitor
Hillsborough Community College - The InLab@HCC	\$1,000	Exhibitor	Expo Exhibitor
Learning Alliance Corporation	\$1,000	Exhibitor	Expo Exhibitor
National Aviation Academy	\$1,000	Exhibitor	Expo Exhibitor
The Walt Disney Company	\$1,000	Exhibitor	Expo Exhibitor
Western Governors University	\$1,000	Exhibitor	Expo Exhibitor
Addison HVAC	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Aerojet Rocketdyne	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Amazon (Orlando Location)	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Applied Technology Academy	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
AshBritt	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Astro Travel & Tours, Inc.	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Broward County Sheriff's Office	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
CAP Government	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
CollabFirst	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Cutrale Farms	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Florida International University	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor

Awards/Sponsorships			
GEICO	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Home Builders Institute	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Legends Airways	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Navy Recruiting Reserve Command	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
NextEra Energy	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Northrop Grumman	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Okaloosa County Sheriff	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Orange County Sheriff	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Pensacola Police Department	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Pike Corporation	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Piper Aircraft, Inc	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Regal Boats	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Revature	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Ring Power	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Seminole County Sheriff	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Southern States Toyotalift	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Universal Orlando	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
VectorCSP	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
VetCor	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Vitas Healthcare	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor
Wounded Veterans Relief Fund	\$500	Exhibitor	Expo Employer Exhibitor

Awards/Sponsorships			
Boeing	\$9,000	Donation	Skillbridge
Other Supporters	\$810	Donation	General Mission
Total FY 2021-22	\$332,006		


Outlook

Veterans Florida hit the ground running in the first year as the State of Florida's newly designated SkillBridge assistance organization, and the popularity of the initiative due to the service provided by our team grew beyond our expectations and gained traction over state lines with 70% of our accepted servicemembers transitioning to Florida to enroll in SkillBridge internships at targeted industry employers. All funds from the Workforce Training Grant were disbursed to partnered employers ahead of schedule for the second straight year, allowing us to raise the bar on their training plans to strengthen military-to-employer talent pipelines and Florida's future veteran workforce.

The Entrepreneurship Program served the most veterans in its seven-year history by expanding our footprint across the state to meet veterans where they are and at any stage of their venture. The success of adding new partners and increasing the cohort, coworking, and networking opportunities bear out in the quality of Florida veteran small business startups at the 2022 Battle of the Pitches; where proprietary inventors and software developers took the top spots in our largest and most competitive statewide pitch competition yet.

The 2022 Expo returned to an in-person format in Orlando for the first time since 2019, and our team doubled the number of employers, sponsors, exhibitors, and pitch competitors in attendance. The 2023 Expo will be June 9-10 at the Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore to allow more veterans to experience the State of Florida's official economic opportunity event for the military community.

Our partnership with the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences for the Agriculture Program fulfilled the 2020-23 United States Department of Agriculture grant's mission, and we will reapply for the award after maintaining a 100% job offer rate to veteran graduates. Adding SkillBridge to the fellowship opened the door for servicemembers to apply, leading us to expand the program to more research farms across the state to keep pace with growing demand.



Equipped and guided by a new three-year strategic plan, Veterans Florida aims to build on the successes from the 2022-23 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 to the powerful career and entrepreneurship tools, training, and resources that make Florida the nation's most veteran-friendly state.



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