

ENTREPRENEURSHIP | NOVEMBER 2024

VETERAN CERTIFICATION: Debunking Myths and Streamlining Processes



About the D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF)

Syracuse University’s D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) was founded in 2011, as a partnership between Syracuse University and JPMorgan Chase & Co. Headquartered on the campus of Syracuse University and located in the Daniel and Gayle D’Aniello Building at the Syracuse University National Veterans Resource Center, the IVMF was founded as higher-education’s first interdisciplinary academic institute singularly focused on advancing the lives of the nation’s military, veterans, and their families. The IVMF team designs and delivers class-leading training programs and services to the military-connected community, in support of the transition from military to civilian life and beyond. Each year, more than 20,000 service members, veterans, and family members engage IVMF programs and services, which are provided at largely no cost to participants. The IVMF’s programs are informed by the Institute’s sustained and robust data collection, research, and policy analysis team and infrastructure. The D’Aniello Institute’s work on behalf of the military-connected community is made possible by gifts and grants from individuals and corporations committed to those who served in America’s armed forces and their families. For more information, please visit ivmf.syracuse.edu

About the Center of Excellence (CoE) for Veteran Entrepreneurship

The Center of Excellence (CoE) for Veteran Entrepreneurship, powered by Fiserv, is the nation’s premier center of research, trusted thought leadership, and innovative programming positioned to advance opportunities for transitioning servicemembers, veterans, and their families to successfully pursue business ownership in America. Leveraging the resources and established networks of Syracuse University, the D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF), and their corporate partners, the CoE brings together a cohesive ecosystem focused on veteran/spouse-owned small business. Founded by Fiserv, a global provider of financial technology services, the CoE aligns with the company’s military and veterans engagement strategy called Fiserv Salutes, which provides the military community with career opportunities, education resources, and business solutions for military-connected businesses.

About the Coalition for Veteran Owned Business (CVOB)

The Coalition for Veteran Owned Business (CVOB) is a group comprised of industry leaders committed to providing opportunities and growth for veteran and military spouse-owned businesses. This first-of-its-kind national initiative supports the success of veteran, service member, and military spouse-owned businesses by connecting them with entrepreneurial education and training, small business resources and solutions, and commerce and supplier opportunities to help connect and educate both sides on doing business together.

Authors

This publication, developed by the IVMF at Syracuse University, provides timely updates and critical insights into the evolving landscape of veteran certification. This paper is dedicated to demystifying the certification process for veteran-owned businesses and advocating for streamlined, unified certification standards that enhance procurement opportunities for veteran-owned businesses within corporate supply chains. By addressing the complexities and challenges associated with veteran certification, the series aims to foster greater collaboration among certifying bodies, corporations, and veteran service organizations, ultimately supporting the growth and sustainability of veteran-owned businesses.

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Executive Summary

The D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University, has worked to increase the number of procurement-ready veteran-owned businesses (VOBs), while simultaneously working with corporations to build and expand upon their veteran business procurement strategies. In 2016, IVMF partnered with Fiserv to create the CVOB to further this work. Fortune 1000 corporations have written veterans into their supplier diversity strategies because of the immense benefits veteran-owned businesses provide to the corporation. According to a study by the Hackett Group, “up to 10 percent of sales come with supplier diversity requirements, suggesting that the lack of such program can even result in lost revenue.”^{vi} While both corporations and VOBs benefit from working together, the onerous certification process creates barriers that hinder both sides from doing business together.

According to the National Survey of Military Affiliated Entrepreneurs, 61% of VOBs reported that applying for government certifications was difficult.ⁱⁱ The growth potential offered by private contracting opportunities is appealing to VOBs, thus arguing that a synchronized veteran-owned certification process will aid in veteran business growth.

Unlike other diverse groups that are served by one generally accepted certification, such as Women’s Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC), National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC), and National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), there is no single certifying body or certifying process for corporations to identify verified veteran-owned and operated firms. In addition to varying state certifications and the option to self-certify, there are three private and one federal organization that offer veteran-specific business certification(s). The current state of veteran business certification divides the marketplace and puts pressure on both VOBs and corporations to multiply the time and money spent to make the needed procurement connections.

The SBA now provides a generally accepted certification process for VOBs, focused on small businesses. However, this may not fully meet the needs of larger corporations that are more concerned with the ownership and management of veteran-owned enterprises, regardless of their size. A more flexible certification process that includes both small and larger VOBs would better enable corporations to connect, track, and report on veteran-owned business spend. Recent advancements have also emerged through corporate initiatives like Amazon’s Military Family-Owned Badge and Google’s Veteran-Led attribute, which allow veteran and military family entrepreneurs to increase visibility on major platforms. While these initiatives help boost recognition for veteran-owned businesses, they complement rather than replace the need for formal certification. The duplicity of multiple certifications continues to add confusion, cost, and time burdens for VOBs entering private sector supply chains. Many of these challenges persist today.

We all have the same goal of providing opportunities for VOB growth and sustainability. To accomplish this, we need a streamlined VOB certification process that will require certifying bodies, corporations, and veteran services organizations to work together. This paper affirms the continued intent of the IVMF and CVOB to demystify and help streamline the process by advocating for the establishment of either one nationally recognized certification, or a unified verification process where all certifying bodies work together towards a reciprocal solution. This will enable corporations to utilize the unified process in their supplier diversity policies.

Introduction

Since 2016, the Coalition for Veteran Owned Business (CVOB), situated within the D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University and supported by Fiserv, has worked to increase the number of procurement-ready veteran-owned businesses (VOBs) with the goal that more will enter into public and private sector supply chains. A procurement-ready business is one that is prepared and equipped to bid on, and maintain, contracts with larger companies for business-related goods and/or services. The CVOB uses impactful trainings, informative publications, and timely administration of quality resources to increase the number of procurement-ready VOBs while simultaneously working with corporations to build and expand upon their veteran business procurement strategies.

Although Fortune 1000 corporations have written VOBs into their supplier diversity strategies, there is no single certifying body or certifying process for corporations to identify verified veterans- or veteran with disabilities-owned and operated firms, unlike majority women-, LGBT-, and minority-owned businesses which are certified through one nationally recognized organization Women’s Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC), National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC), and National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), respectively. Working with VOBs that self-identify - that is, declare themselves as veteran-owned without the backing of a certifying body - could jeopardize the integrity of reporting on supplier diversity initiatives.ⁱⁱⁱ Namely, corporations could fall victim to businesses that self-certify as veteran-owned to attract supplier opportunities when they are not.^{iv} Behavior often referred to as “stolen valor” would negate the corporation’s diverse supplier benefit, thus making a third-party certifier an efficient option for both VOBs and corporations. A third-party certifier would eliminate the need for corporations themselves to perform the tedious process of collecting and verifying information, which would require multiple communications with the VOB.^v The need to certify is crucial for government entities as well. Procuring goods and services from officially certified VOBs support the economic wellbeing of the veteran community, prevents fraud, appropriately allocates government funds, and complies with legal obligations.

To avoid this scenario, many corporations require a formal certification as a prerequisite for procurement opportunities. A formal certification saves the corporation from the time and money involved in verifying the veteran-owned status of the supplier. Currently, there exists three private, national organizations and one public, federal organization for a VOB to obtain their designation, each with different certification processes. In addition, many states have established their own certification process that is separate from national certifying bodies, used either as an alternative to, or addition to, national certification.

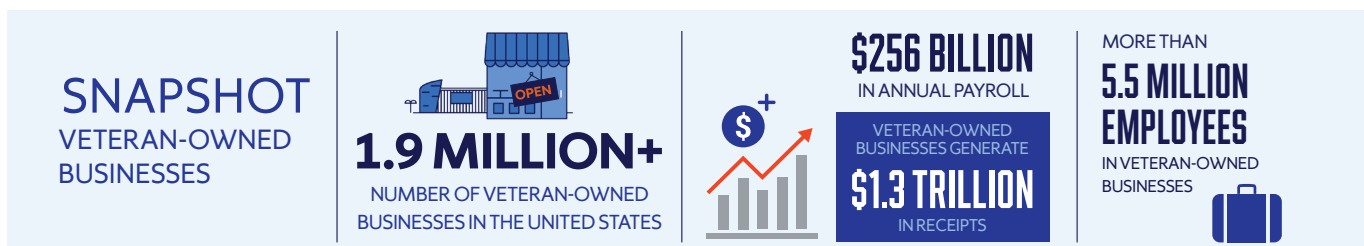
The CVOB has identified the need to synchronize the certification process for VOBs, a move that would benefit both the VOB and the supplier diversity professional who is looking to make a connection. A restructured, uniform, or reciprocal method of certification would have a dual benefit: for the VOB, it would greatly simplify the path to verification and increase their presence in target markets; and for corporations, it would better enable them to meet their diverse supplier targets with qualified VOBs.

Veteran Entrepreneurship: An Overview

VOBs represent a vital and effective component of the U.S. economy, offering companies a valuable option for diversifying their supplier strategies. With over 1.9 million VOBs in the United States, veterans are significantly more likely to own businesses than their non-veteran counterparts.¹ This entrepreneurial inclination is driven by the qualities that drew them to military service and the skills they acquired during their time in uniform.

Research shows that veteran entrepreneurs tend to out-earn their non-veteran peers, with veteran-owned businesses generating \$1.3 trillion in receipts, employing 5.5 million people, and distributing nearly \$256 billion in annual payroll.¹ Veteran business-owning households also typically have higher net worth than those of non-business-owning veterans, making entrepreneurship an appealing and often successful path for many veterans.

Veteran entrepreneurs are motivated by various factors—some turn to entrepreneurship due to limited employment options, while others are eager to apply the skills and discipline gained from their military service. In fact, 93% of veteran entrepreneurs report that their military experience has positively influenced their business ventures. Despite these strengths, veteran entrepreneurs face significant challenges, particularly in three critical areas: securing access to capital, effectively navigating available resources, and building and leveraging human and social capital.



As government contracts remain challenging for many VOBs to obtain, and private contracting opportunities present their own set of challenges, the appeal of these private opportunities continues to grow. This situation highlights the need for a more straightforward certification process. By simplifying certification, VOBs can more readily enter private sector supply chains, improving efficiency for corporations and easing the administrative burden associated with verifying certifications.

1 According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (2023), veterans own more than 1.9 million businesses in the U.S., contributing significantly to the nation’s economy. Retrieved from <https://advocacy.sba.gov/2023/11/07/facts-about-small-business-veteran-ownership-statistics-2>

Certification Overview

THE PRINCIPLE

The principle underlying certification is that a business's legitimacy and eligibility for certain benefits and opportunities are validated through a trusted, independent third-party endorsement. This endorsement is provided through a standardized, auditable process that confirms a business is majority-owned, controlled, and led by an individual who belongs to a specific demographic group, such as veterans. This process ensures that the business meets established criteria and standards, offering both corporations and government entities confidence that they are engaging with businesses that genuinely represent the veteran community. Certification serves as a critical validation, helping to open doors to procurement opportunities and other benefits that support the growth and sustainability of veteran-owned businesses.

TYPES OF CERTIFICATIONS

Variations in the types of certifications exist, in part, due to differences in the eligibility criteria for various categories of veterans and the size of the businesses they own. Certifications typically fall into two main categories: "Veteran Owned" and "Service-Disabled Veteran Owned," with distinctions also made based on the size of the business, such as small businesses versus those that do not meet SBA small business standards.

These variations are influenced by the complex nature of defining who qualifies as a "Veteran," as government definitions can vary depending on the legislation governing each department. Simply having worn a U.S. military uniform does not automatically qualify an individual for small business certification. Additionally, "Service Disabled" status requires a specific determination of a disability related to military service, further adding complexity to the certification process. Moreover, the typical size definitions for small businesses, such as those set by the SBA, also play a critical role in determining eligibility for certain certifications.

This complexity necessitates a clear understanding of the different certification types and the specific requirements for each, ensuring that veteran-owned businesses can navigate the process effectively and gain the benefits associated with these certifications.

THE PROCESS

In general, despite the existence of multiple certification regimes - offered by both governments and nonprofits - the certification process has significant commonality. First, the business owner must provide a variety of documentation to demonstrate that the business is a legally compliant, going concern - for example, incorporation documentation and financial records. Second, the majority business owner must provide documentation to demonstrate their status as a veteran and their ownership and control of the organization - for example, military records like the Department of Defense Form 214, "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty." Finally, some processes incorporate an in-person or virtual "site visit" or interview with the owner. Each certification regime has differences in required statuses, documentation, submission sequencing, and review timelines.

The current state of veteran business certification divides the marketplace and puts pressure on both VOBs and corporations to multiply the time and money spent to make the needed procurement connections. A synchronized certification process for VOBs would be an effective and efficient way for corporations to track and report on supplier diversity spend as it is much more difficult to track and report on diverse spending when VOBs are not formally verified. Some corporations are reluctant to work with a self-identified (commonly referred to as "self-certified") VOB that they cannot confidently report on, nor do they want to initiate their own certification process. Alternately, some veterans who own businesses are discouraged by attempting to navigate the onerous certification process, and as a result, opt to self-identify, thereby missing critical business opportunities. This complicated process has led to missed opportunities for both VOBs and corporations.

According to the National Survey of Military Affiliated Entrepreneurs, 61% of VOBs reported that applying for government certifications was difficult.^{vi} We are aligned around a unified goal of creating opportunities for VOBs. Therefore, groups like Billion Dollar Roundtable, corporations, and veteran service organizations like the CVOB must align efforts to encourage best practices and growth among the certifying bodies, to streamline the processes and expectations for VOBs that will increase business connections between VOBs and corporations so that the business owners can focus on leveraging opportunities to accelerate their businesses.

VOB Certification Findings from the National Survey of Military-Affiliated Entrepreneurs (2022) ^{vii}

- 65% were formally or informally certified by a national, state, local, or database self-certification body
- VOBs with higher revenue are more likely to have certifications: ^{viii}
 - 53% of Foundational Stage businesses have certifications, but 77% have not yet earned revenue from clients requiring certification.
 - 64% of Startup Stage businesses are certified (Revenue: up to \$250k)
 - 84% of Growth Stage businesses are certified (Revenue: \$250k-\$1M)
 - 86% of Acceleration Stage businesses are certified (Revenue: \$1M-\$5M)
 - 92% of Sustainability Stage businesses are certified (Revenue: over \$5M)

IMPORTANCE OF SUPPLIER DIVERSITY TO VETERAN ENTREPRENEURS - WHY CERTIFY?

“customer demand,” “access to preferential development programs,” “access to capital,” “corporate reputation”

Certification is more than just a formality for VOBs; it is a strategic tool that can significantly enhance access to procurement opportunities. In today's competitive market, certification can be a differentiator, offering several key benefits, such as increased customer demand, access to preferential development programs, improved access to capital, and an enhanced corporate reputation.

Given the different certification processes, VOBs need to consider several things when seeking contract opportunities:

- The corporation(s) the VOB is targeting and whether that corporation requires or prefers a certification
- The different types of certifications and which one provides the most benefit to the VOB
- The amount of time and money that will need to be invested to become certified and recertified
- The ideal time in their business lifecycle to seek certification

We spoke with several veteran business owners to understand their experience with certification. Here is one person's comment:

“It is hard enough to manage a small business let alone manage several different veteran certifications. There really needs to be one standard for the entire veteran community that is recognized nationally by both government as well as industry. If there is going to be an emphasis on utilizing veteran-owned businesses, then the certification must hold some weight. Sadly, we have learned recently that the designation has been largely de-periodized for the award of government contracts.”

- Army Veteran Entrepreneur, President, Manufacturing Industry

IMPORTANCE OF SUPPLIER DIVERSITY TO CUSTOMERS

Not all certifications are relevant and that different customers have very different goals/priorities and purchasing processes.

Not all certifications are relevant to every business context, and different customers—whether in the private or public sectors—have varying goals, priorities, and purchasing processes. Recognizing these differences is essential for both corporations and veteran-owned businesses to maximize the value of supplier diversity initiatives.

Private Sector (Business to Business)

Many corporations understand the benefit of working with diverse suppliers and creating robust procurement strategies. The Billion Dollar Roundtable (BDR), which consists of nearly 30 of the largest corporations in the country, was formed to encourage supplier diversity initiatives within big business. Members of the BDR are required to spend a minimum of \$1B annually with diverse businesses in their tier one activities, and for good reason.^{ix} According to the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, diverse suppliers are, “organic disrupters...they are adaptable, and create multiplier-effects of job gains and positive community mobility.”^x Corporations are also tracking major shifts in the American economy. Business ownership by diverse groups is increasing considerably as they begin to make up a greater percentage of the population. These diverse groups also make up a larger percentage of the customer base and a diverse customer base resonates more closely with a diverse supplier base. Diverse suppliers also produce a “multiplier effect” in that they are more likely to hire a diverse workforce, therefore contributing to the diversification of spend in an increasingly global economy.^{xi} According to the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), diverse suppliers have a significant economic yield, to include more than \$401B in revenue, the creation of more than 2 million jobs, and more than \$48B in tax revenues.^{xii} According to corporate supplier diversity representatives, big companies are making efforts to grow their diverse spend now more than ever before as a result of the economic impact brought on by COVID-19. Data demonstrates a positive correlation between supplier diversity initiatives and business performance. According to a study by the Hackett Group, “up to 10 percent of sales come with supplier diversity requirements, suggesting that the lack of such a program can even result in lost revenue.” They also noted that, “business leaders often worry that dedicating resources to [supplier diversity] will impact procurement savings or even quality,” however, their research showed, “top performers are not seeing losses in efficiency, and quality often improves.” In the same study, it was reported that all diversity suppliers either met or exceeded their expectations, and that they had not seen a loss in efficiency or savings, meaning only 1% of diverse suppliers fell short of expectations.^{xiii}

For supplier diversity initiatives to be successful, they must be aligned with the culture and strategic approaches of the company. A company's supplier diversity program must first be established within its corporate policies and it is imperative that leadership is committed to its success.^{xiv} Organizational culture is directly related to operational effectiveness; therefore, it influences supplier diversity effectiveness as well. According to research on organizational culture and supplier diversity, organizations with a constructive culture, where "achievement, self-actualizing, humanistic, and affiliative styles of relating are encouraged among organizational measures," are most likely to have successful supplier diversity programs.^{xv}

Public Sector (Business to Government)

In the public sector, supplier diversity is not just a strategic initiative but often a legal requirement. Government agencies at the federal, state, and local levels have implemented various mandates and goals for contracting with diverse suppliers, including VOBs. These mandates are designed to ensure that public funds are spent in a way that promotes equity and inclusivity, reflecting the diversity of the population.

Supplier diversity in government contracting helps to level the playing field by giving diverse businesses access to lucrative government contracts. This is especially important for VOBs, which may face barriers in competing with larger, more established firms. By including VOBs in their supplier diversity programs, government agencies not only support the veteran community but also enhance the resilience and innovation of their supply chains.

However, the effectiveness of these programs depends on the clarity and accessibility of the certification process. A standardized, recognized certification for VOBs can help streamline the procurement process, making it easier for government agencies to identify and engage with qualified suppliers. Additionally, government agencies can benefit from collaborating with corporate partners and veteran service organizations to align certification standards and share best practices, ultimately improving the impact of their supplier diversity efforts.

General Consumers (Business to Consumer)

For general consumers, supplier diversity resonates with growing expectations for social responsibility and ethical business practices. Consumers are increasingly aware of the importance of supporting businesses that reflect their values and often their identities, including those owned by veterans, women, minorities, and other diverse groups. This awareness is driving demand for products and services from companies that prioritize diversity in their supply chains. For example, there are dozens of Veteran-Owned, direct-to-consumer coffee roasters that seek to differentiate from the hundreds of roasters nationwide by highlighting their veteran ownership and management through certifications - including through independent third parties, governments, and self-certification.

Businesses that incorporate supplier diversity into their consumer-facing strategies can differentiate themselves in the marketplace. Highlighting partnerships with diverse suppliers, including VOBs, can enhance brand reputation, build consumer trust, and attract a broader customer base. In an era where consumers are more informed and values-driven, the commitment to diversity in sourcing can be a powerful tool for customer engagement and loyalty.

Moreover, companies that embrace supplier diversity often find that their diverse suppliers bring fresh perspectives, innovative solutions, and a deep understanding of diverse consumer needs. This can lead to better products and services that resonate with a wider audience, ultimately driving growth and profitability.

Separating Myth from Fact: Common Certification Misconceptions

Certification for VOBs is a crucial step in securing access to procurement opportunities and establishing credibility with corporate and government partners. However, several misconceptions often cloud the understanding of what certification entails and its potential benefits. Drawing on insights from the National Survey of Military-Affiliated Entrepreneurs (NSMAE), we clarify some of the most common misconceptions.

MYTH # 1

Certification is Easy and Quick

FACT:

According to the NSMAE, 61% of VOBs report that applying for government certifications is difficult. The process often involves a significant investment of time and resources, requiring thorough documentation and adherence to strict criteria. While challenging, certification is essential for gaining access to many procurement opportunities, and efforts are ongoing to streamline and simplify the process.

MYTH # 4

All Certifications are the Same

FACT:

Not all certifications are created equal. The NSMAE reveals that the type of certification a VOB holds can significantly impact its access to opportunities. For example, certain certifications are tailored for small businesses, while others may cater specifically to service-disabled veterans. Understanding these differences is crucial for VOBs seeking to maximize the benefits of certification.

MYTH # 2

Certification Automatically Leads to Increased Revenue

FACT:

Certification enhances a VOBs' credibility and visibility, but it does not guarantee financial success. The NSMAE findings indicate that while certified businesses are more likely to be considered for contracts, they must still compete on the basis of price, quality, and service. Certification is a valuable tool, but it must be leveraged alongside strong business practices to translate into increased revenue.

MYTH # 5

Government Contracts Are More Lucrative Than Private Contracts

FACT:

While government contracts are often seen as more profitable, private sector contracts can be equally, if not more, lucrative. Major corporations, through initiatives like the Billion Dollar Roundtable (BDR), spend at least \$1 billion annually with diverse businesses, including VOBs. Diverse suppliers in the private sector generate over \$401 billion in revenue and create more than 2 million jobs. Studies also show that supplier diversity positively impacts business performance, making private contracts a strong revenue opportunity for VOBs.

MYTH # 2

Self-Certification is Sufficient

FACT:

While self-certification might seem like a convenient shortcut, it lacks the credibility of third-party certification. The NSMAE highlights that many corporations and government entities prefer or even require formal certification from a recognized body to ensure the integrity of their supplier diversity reporting. Relying solely on self-certification can result in missed opportunities and limited market access, particularly for business-to-government and business-to-business engagements.

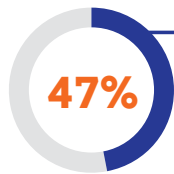
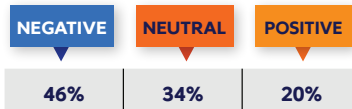
Spotlight: Military Spouse Certification^{xvi}

Military spouse-owned businesses face unique challenges, such as frequent relocations and limited access to resources. Despite these obstacles, they contribute significantly to the economy. However, their access to procurement opportunities is often constrained by the absence of a formal, widely recognized certification process. Some efforts, such as the certification provided by the Military Spouse Chamber of Commerce, have been initiated to address this gap. Findings from the NSMAE reveal a strong entrepreneurial spirit among military spouses, with 89% viewing themselves as entrepreneurs and 48% as social entrepreneurs focused on solving social, cultural, or environmental issues. Most military spouse entrepreneurs indicate that achieving financial independence through their businesses is a challenge. Only 28% of respondents can fully support themselves or their families through their businesses. The major hurdles they face include limited access to capital and the unpredictability of their income, which are significant barriers to growing and sustaining their businesses. Despite these financial challenges, 59% of these businesses are certified, which is crucial for accessing broader markets and securing government contracts. The support system for military spouse entrepreneurs needs strengthening, especially in terms of financial guidance and access to resources. There is a notable gap in the support available to help them navigate the unique challenges they face.

CAREER EXPERIENCES

Our findings reveal that a substantial 46% of military spouses perceive their affiliation as negatively affecting their career prospects, with nearly half reporting discrimination in job opportunities due to their status. Notably, 74% of respondents recognize entrepreneurship as a positive force in their professional lives. There are challenges and awareness related to Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA). Among those military spouses stationed overseas at any time, 35% are fully aware of SOFA, yet over half have experienced direct impacts on their work or entrepreneurial activities due to these agreements. This highlights the need for enhanced support systems and better dissemination of information to aid military spouses in their professional journey.

WHAT IMPACT HAS BEING A MILITARY SPOUSE HAD ON YOUR ABILITY TO PURSUE A CAREER?



- FELT THEY DIDN'T GET A JOB OR WERE TREATED DIFFERENTLY FOR BEING A MILITARY SPOUSE
- ▶ 74% AGREE THAT ENTREPRENEURSHIP HAS POSITIVELY CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR PROFESSIONAL LIFE

STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENTS (SOFA)

75% REPORTED THEIR MILITARY SPOUSE HAD BEEN STATIONED OVERSEAS, OF THESE:

- ▶ 35% are completely aware of SOFA; 20% are somewhat or a little aware; 45% are not at all aware
- ▶ 29% found it difficult to gather information on SOFA
- ▶ 52% reported that SOFA impacted their work or entrepreneurship when stationed overseas

CERTIFICATIONS

59% OF MILITARY SPOUSE-OWNED BUSINESSES ARE CERTIFIED FORMALLY OR INFORMALLY CERTIFIED BY A NATIONAL, STATE, LOCAL OR DATABASE/ SELF-CERTIFICATION BODY.



33% PLAN TO GET THEIR BUSINESS CERTIFIED

- ▶ 45% OF SPOUSE AS PRIMARY ARE CERTIFIED (21% PLANNING TO BE CERTIFIED)
- ▶ 67% OF SPOUSE AS SECONDARY (44% PLANNING TO BE CERTIFIED)

48%

OF MILITARY SPOUSE-OWNED BUSINESSES RECEIVE REVENUE FROM CLIENTS THAT REQUIRE CERTIFICATION

OF THOSE, HOW MUCH REVENUE REQUIRING CERTIFICATION IS FROM GOVERNMENT?

- ▶ 62% No revenue
- ▶ 14% 1-50% revenue
- ▶ 13% 51-100% revenue
- ▶ 10% Not sure how much

To read more about Military Spouses visit > ivmf.syracuse.edu/nsmae/



Spotlight: Women Veteran Entrepreneurs^{xvii}

Women veteran entrepreneurs are a rapidly growing and essential segment of the entrepreneurial landscape, contributing both economically and socially. However, they face distinct challenges due to their dual identity as women and veterans, often struggling with recognition and access to necessary resources. Understanding the intersection of these identities is crucial to addressing the unique needs of women veteran-owned businesses.

Findings from the NSMAE reveal a strong entrepreneurial spirit among women veterans, with 57% identifying as social entrepreneurs focused on solving social, cultural, or environmental issues. Despite their passion and drive, these entrepreneurs face significant barriers, particularly in accessing capital, with 37% citing this as a major challenge. Additionally, 45% report difficulties navigating local resources, and 62% find the certification process challenging. Financial stress is also a major concern, with 67% of women veteran entrepreneurs experiencing stress due to their business's financial condition. These findings highlight the need for targeted support to help them overcome these barriers and thrive in the marketplace.

TOP MOTIVATIONS TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

	FEMALE	MALE
MAINTAIN PERSONAL FREEDOM	36%	36%
THE CHANCE TO IMPLEMENT OWN IDEAS	34%	31%
THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT	31%	36%
HELPING SOCIETY/SUPPORTING COMMUNITY	30%	19%
HAVING MORE FREE TIME/FLEXIBLE HOURS	29%	24%
IMPROVING MY QUALITY OF LIFE	28%	25%
OPPORTUNITIES TO INNOVATE	26%	18%
MAKE MY OWN DECISIONS	25%	39%
PERSONAL BELIEF/FAITH	18%	19%
SECURE FUTURE FOR MY FAMILY	17%	20%

THE TOP MOTIVATION FOR FEMALE VETERAN ENTREPRENEURS WAS TO MAINTAIN PERSONAL FREEDOM (36%)

FEMALE VETERAN ENTREPRENEURS ARE:

- **1.58X MORE LIKELY** to indicate “helping society/supporting community” as a top motivation for starting their business compared to their male counterparts
- **1.21X MORE LIKELY** to indicate “more free time/flexible hours” compared to their male counterparts
- **1.16X MORE LIKELY** to indicate “opportunities to innovate” compared to their male counterparts

To read more about Women Veteran Entrepreneurs visit > ivmf.syracuse.edu/nsmae/



CERTIFICATIONS



57%

FORMALLY OR INFORMALLY CERTIFIED BY A NATIONAL, STATE, LOCAL OR DATABASE/ SELF-CERTIFICATION BODY (COMPARED TO 72% OF MALES)

62%

BELIEVE THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS IS DIFFICULT (COMPARED TO 63% OF MALES)

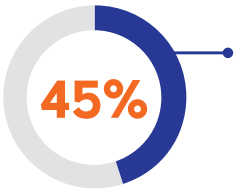
43%

FIND APPLYING FOR NON-GOVERNMENT CERTIFICATIONS TO BE DIFFICULT (COMPARED TO 36% OF MALES)

22%

FIND IT EASY TO MAINTAIN THE CERTIFICATION(S) (COMPARED TO 29% OF MALES)

CORPORATE CONTRACTS



INDICATE THAT FINDING CORPORATE CONTRACTS THAT REQUIRE CERTIFICATION(S) IS

NOT EASY

(COMPARED TO 56% OF MALES)



RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- ▶ **45%** believe that the government does NOT provide adequate assistance with the government contracting
- ▶ **42%** believe that the government does NOT provide adequate assistance with the certification process
- ▶ **31%** believe there are enough resources to assist through the certification process

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

43%

FIND IT DIFFICULT TO DO GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING (COMPARE TO 62% OF MALES)

59%

FIND APPLYING FOR THE GOVERNMENT CERTIFICATIONS TO BE DIFFICULT (COMPARED TO 60% OF MALES)

To read more about Women Veteran Entrepreneurs visit > ivmf.syracuse.edu/nsmae/



Conclusion and Recommendations

There is still much work to be done to integrate VOBs into the supply chains of major corporations as thoughtfully as other diverse groups. The complexities and fragmentation of the current certification process create barriers. A clear and synchronized VOB certification process would enable corporations to connect with high-quality and innovative VOBs more effortlessly, thereby strengthening and diversifying their supply chains. Investing in diverse procurement strategies aimed at VOBs not only supports veteran-owned businesses but also drives economic growth and innovation at the local, state, national, and international levels.

Currently, the certification process places a heavy burden on veteran business owners in terms of both financial cost and time, while corporations face challenges in accepting and trusting multiple certifications. To overcome these obstacles, certifying bodies, corporations, and veteran service organizations must collaborate to streamline the verification process. The IVMF and CVOB are committed to advocating for a nationally recognized standard, similar to those for other diverse groups, such as WBENC, NGLCC, and NMSDC. By unifying efforts across the ecosystem, we can optimize resources and create more robust connections between corporations and VOBs.

CURRENT LANDSCAPE

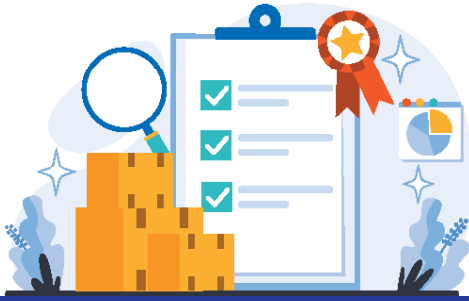
- ▶ **Veteran certification provides a benefit to both VOBs and corporations through procurement opportunities and supplier diversity initiatives.**
- ▶ **There is not a generally accepted veteran certification. Therefore, the veteran certification ecosystem is rapidly changing and fragmented between the private sector and public sector leading to confusion and frustration.**

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ **While both corporations and VOBs benefit from working together, the unclear and duplicative process creates barriers that hinder both sides from doing business together.**
- ▶ **Certifying bodies, corporations, veteran service organizations and government entities have an opportunity to come together to drive efficiency, simplicity & standardization in the certification process that will be beneficial for all stakeholders.**

KEY FINDINGS & INSIGHTS

- ▶ The veteran certification ecosystem is currently fragmented between the private and public sectors, leading to confusion and inefficiencies. This fragmented process imposes significant financial and time burdens on VOBs, while also complicating corporations' efforts to integrate VOBs into their supply chains.
- ▶ The lack of a clear, unified certification process creates barriers to effective collaboration between VOBs and corporations. This results in missed opportunities for both parties, as corporations struggle to identify and trust certified VOBs, and VOBs find it challenging to access procurement opportunities.
- ▶ There is increasing interest from policymakers, as evidenced by recent discussions at veteran small business roundtables, in reforming certification processes and implementing policy options like set-aside contracts, price preference laws, and enhanced capital access programs for VOBs.
- ▶ Aligning the VOB certification process will require coordinated efforts among certifying bodies, corporations, veteran service organizations, and government entities. Such collaboration is crucial for simplifying the certification process and enhancing the overall ecosystem's efficiency.



ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR BUSINESS OWNERS:

- ▶ Despite the complexity, it is crucial for VOBs to thoroughly understand the existing certification options and requirements to maximize their access to procurement opportunities.
- ▶ Certification should be viewed not just as a regulatory requirement but as a strategic asset that enhances credibility and opens doors to new markets. Business owners should also advocate for a more streamlined certification process.
- ▶ Engage with veteran service organizations and industry groups to advocate for policy changes that simplify the certification process and reduce the burden on VOBs.

FOR GOVERNMENTS:

- ▶ Lead efforts to create a unified, nationally recognized certification process for VOBs. This should include reciprocal recognition among certifying bodies, reducing duplication and confusion, and making certification more accessible for veteran-owned businesses.
- ▶ Implement policies that go beyond set-aside contracts, such as price preference laws, using government contracts as loan collateral, and providing additional grant funding and loan preferences. These initiatives will enhance the financial stability and growth potential of VOBs.
- ▶ Foster partnerships between certifying bodies, corporations, and veteran service organizations to streamline certification requirements and procedures. This collaboration can help develop model legislative or regulatory frameworks that simplify the process across different levels of government.

FOR CORPORATE CUSTOMERS:

- ▶ Corporations should make a concerted effort to incorporate certified VOBs into their supplier diversity programs. This not only supports the veteran community but also enhances corporate procurement strategies by introducing high-quality, innovative suppliers.
- ▶ Engage with certifying bodies and government entities to streamline and standardize the certification process, making it easier to identify and trust certified VOBs. This collaboration can reduce the strategic burden on corporations and improve efficiency in supplier diversity programs.
- ▶ Corporations should champion supplier diversity initiatives that prioritize VOBs and other diverse suppliers. By supporting efforts to standardize certifications and simplifying procurement processes, corporations can create more inclusive and effective supply chains.



Certification Comparison

Nationally, there are three private and one federal organization that offer veteran-specific business certification(s):

PRIVATE

- ▶ National Veteran Owned Business Association (NaVOBA - navoba.org)
- ▶ National Veteran Business Development Council (NVBDC - nvbdc.org)
- ▶ Disability:IN (disabilityin.org)

FEDERAL

- ▶ SBA's Veteran Small Business Certification (VetCert) - <https://veterans.certify.sba.gov/>)

The table on the next page highlights the differences between the various certification paths that a VOB can pursue.

Figure 1: CERTIFICATION COMPARISON CHART*

While the complex Veteran-Owned Business (VOB) certification landscape rapidly changes, veteran entrepreneurs continue to outpace their civilian counterparts and VOBs remain valuable supplier partners delivering high quality, innovative products and services.

		National Certifiers (Private)			National Certifier (Government)	State & Local Government Certifiers (P.25)	Non-Certifying Options	
		NaVOBA navoba.org (P.18)	NVBDC nvbdc.org (P.20)	Disability:IN disabilityin.org (P.21)	VetCert veterans.certify.sba.gov (P.23)	Directory Registration (P.41)	Self Certification (P.40)	
General Information	Approximate # certified (As of 2024)	< 1000	< 1000	<100	31,024 (as of Nov.2024)	Varies	No certification required	N/A
	Veteran-Related Certifications Offered	VBE SDVBE	SD/VOB	V-DOBE SDV-DOBE	SDVOSB VOSB	Varies	No certification required	Self-identified VOB or SDVOB
	Organization Type	Nonprofit	Nonprofit	Nonprofit	Government	Government	For profit, nonprofit, & government	N/A
Benefits	Certifications Recognized By	Corporate Allies	Corporate Members Billion Dollar Roundtable	Corporate Partners States: PA, MA, NJ (Hoboken & Jersey city) Billion Dollar Roundtable	Federal Government and some State Governments	State & Local Governments (Varies)	N/A	Cannot be formally counted towards supplier diversity tracking for corporations or the government
	Primary Benefit to VOB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Corporate Contracting Preferences •Multiple networking events each year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Corporate Contracting Preferences •Multiple networking events each year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Corporate Contracting Preferences •Networking & business matchmaking opportunities •Access to information about corporate partners; business scholarship program and webinar series 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Federal Contracting Set Asides •Prime Contractor and Sub-contracting •Online application process via MySBA Certification MySBA Certifications •No Cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •State & Local Contracting: Including Set Asides, Price Preference (varies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •There are some organizations and websites that allow veterans to register as having a VOB/SDVOB designation, regardless of whether they are certified by any certifying body •Placed on the search list for that website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Advertising purposes

THE VETERAN CERTIFICATION COMPARISON CHART IS CONTINUED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE >>

* This chart was created in 2024.

	National Certifiers (Private)			National Certifier (Government)	State & Local Government	Non-Certifying Options		
	NaVOBA navoba.org (P. 18)	NVBDC nvbdc.org (P. 20)	Disability:IN disabilityin.org (P. 21)	VetCert veterans.certify.sba.gov (P. 23)	State & Local Government Certifiers (P.25)	Directory Registration (P.41)	Self Certification (P. 40)	
Process & Costs	Basic Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •At least 51% owned, operated, and controlled by one or more U.S. veterans. •Documentation to verify Veteran Owned status •On-site interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •At least 51% owned, operated, and controlled by one or more U.S. veterans. •Proof of active management •Veteran status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ability to perform in their area of expertise without relying on non-VOBs • On-site interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •At Least 51% owned by disabled veteran, US citizen or lawful permanent resident •Independence from any other business enterprise •Headquartered in the US <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site interview •Provide financial and operational documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Documentation of Veteran Status, ownership and control of business •Possible on-site interview •Must be 51% directly owned by one or more veterans •Veteran(s) must have full control over the day-to-day management, decision making and strategic policies of the business •Veteran(s) must hold the highest position, devote full-time to the business, be the highest compensated employee(s), and have the ability to exercise independent business judgement 	Varies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Registration Form •Additional documentation varies 	N/A
	Certification Cost to Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •\$350: Revenue <\$1 million •\$550: Revenue \$1 - 4.99 million •\$800: Revenue \$5 - 9.99 million •\$1,200: Revenue \$10 - 19.99 million •\$1500: Revenue \$20 - 49.99 million •\$2,000: Revenue \$50 million or greater 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •\$350: Revenue < \$1 million •\$600: Revenue \$1 - 4.99 million •\$900: Revenue \$5 - 9.99 million •\$1,200: Revenue \$10 - 49.99 million •\$1500: Revenue \$50 - 99.99 million •\$2,500: Revenue \$100 million or greater 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •\$300:90 day Processing fee (Regular) •\$1,300: 60 day Expedited Processing fee •\$2,300: 30 day Expedited Processing fee 	No Cost	Varies	Varies	N/A
	Approximate Time Required to Certify	<15 days	FASTTRACK: 30 days Non-FASTTRACK: 60 days	Minimum of 90 Days	Average VetCert processing time prior to new system launch: 31 days (as of Nov.2024)	Varies	Varies	N/A

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT > ivmf.syracuse.edu/programs/entrepreneurship/resources/cvob/

National Certifying Organizations

Below are overviews of each organization and certification. Also included are various state certification options and non-certification routes that veteran business owners may pursue.

NAVOBA: NATIONAL VETERAN OWNED BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

Organization Description - NaVOBA is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, that seeks to create contracting opportunities for VOBs with corporate allies. They do this through “certification, advocacy, outreach, recognition and education.”

Board - Two-thirds of NaVOBA’s Board of Directors’ seats are held by corporations to ensure its alignment with the needs of corporate supplier diversity programs.

Corporate Membership - NaVOBA works with more than 135 corporate allies. To become a corporate ally, the corporation must have “at minimum, a supplier diversity policy inclusive of veteran-owned and/or service-disabled, veteran-owned businesses.” Benefits to being an ally include access to certified VOBs, year-round outreach opportunities (conferences/matchmaking events), access to quarterly reports and biweekly veteran’s enterprise e-newsletter, virtual trainings and webinars, printed conference promotional materials, and digital marketing opportunities. See the table below for corporate ally tiers and some examples.

ALLY TIER	CORPORATIONS
4-Star (\$50,000)	None listed
3-Star (\$25,000)	Armed Forces Insurance, FedEx, JPMorgan Chase, PNC Financial, Barclay’s and Bristol Myers Squibb
2-Star (\$15,000)	Vistra Energy, American International Group (AIG), Hilton Worldwide, Lowe’s Companies, Sanofi
1-Star (\$10,000)	AFLAC, American Airlines, BNY Mellon, CDW, Chrysler, Cintas, C.N.A. Insurance, Cummins, CVS Health, Daiichi-Sankyo, DynCorp International, Express Scripts, Freddie Mac, Ingersoll Rand, Johnson & Johnson, Lockheed Martin, Merck, McKesson, McCormick & Co., Nokia Corporation, Oracle, Pitney Bowes, Professional Golfers Association of America, Prudential, PSEG, RJ Reynolds, Shell, Steelcase, The Hartford, UPS, USAA, US Bank, Wells Fargo, Wyndham Destinations

Services Provided - NaVOBA’s services are three-fold:

- ① **Certification** - NaVOBA certifies VOBs in two categories - Veteran’s Business Enterprise (VBE) and Service-Disabled Veteran’s Business Enterprise (SDVBE). These certifications aim to help both the VOB and corporate ally by creating “a nationally recognized gold standard in certification.” NaVOBA’s VBE/SDVBE certifications directly mirror those of the MBE and WBE certifications and ensures that any certified VBE/SDVBE is at least 51% owned, operated, and controlled by one or more U.S. military veterans. NaVOBA has trademarked the “Certified Veteran’s Business Enterprise™” and “Certified Service-Disabled Veteran’s Business Enterprise™” designations wordmarks and seals, making NaVOBA the exclusive organization certifying VBEs/SDVBEs for the private sector.
- ② **Networking & Development** - NaVOBA connects VOBs to corporate allies through several networking and training events. Their goal is to help businesses become procurement-ready.
- ③ **Corporate Allies** - NaVOBA has a network of more than 135 corporate allies and works to connect them with their certified VOBs.

Application - NaVOBA's certification is focused on private-sector opportunities within corporate ally companies. NaVOBA's process collects the applicant's military service record information directly from the U.S. Federal Government on the veteran's behalf immediately upon initializing the application to eliminate the possibility of fraudulent submissions (e.g. the OPPOSITE of self-certification) while simultaneously accelerating the process. Like other certifications, site visits will be conducted in 100 percent of cases, however, VBE/SDVBE certifications are valid for two (2) years.

Required for Veteran Applicants:

- ▶ Must be at least 51% owned, operated, and controlled by U.S. military veterans
- ▶ Must submit documentation to validate veteran status of owner(s)
- ▶ Must go through an on-site interview with the NaVOBA team
- ▶ Must pay an application fee

Fee - NaVOBA assesses an application fee which is dependent upon a VOB's revenue. See the table below for pricing tiers.

REVENUE TIER	APPLICATION FEE
Less than \$1 million	\$350.00
\$1 million - \$4.99 million	\$550.00
\$5 million - \$9.99 million	\$800.00
\$10 million - \$19.99 million	\$1,200.00
\$20 million - \$49.99 million	\$1,500.00
\$50 million or Greater	\$2,000.00

Timeline - NaVOBA processes completed applications along with an on-site interview. Certificates are issued, on average, in 14.3 days after the site visit. Incomplete application processing times vary depending upon applicant responsiveness.

Required Documents - NaVOBA may require specific documentation based on business structure.

Contact Information - NaVOBA can be reached via the information below:

- ▶ National Veteran Owned Business Association
313-315 N. Main St., Carnegie, PA 15106
Phone - (724) 3-NAVOBA | (724) 362-8622
Email - VBEHelp@NaVOBA.org (for VOBs) | CA@NaVOBA.org (for corporate allies)
Website - <https://navoba.org>¹⁷

NVBDC: NATIONAL VETERAN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Organization Description - NVBDC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that seeks to be a certifying authority for VOBs of all sizes in order to connect them with opportunities at corporations and government agencies.

Board - NVBDC's board is comprised of a board of directors and a board advisory committee, made up of corporations and consulting groups.

Corporate Membership - NVBDC corporate members receive several resources to share the partnership, to include the NVBDC logo, a press release template, a feature blog post, logo featured on the NVBDC website, and online and print marketing tools. Members also receive access to a database of certified VOBs and a business profile on the NVBDC website. Corporate membership rates range from \$7,500 to \$100,000. Corporate partners include but not limited to: General Motors, Ford, T-Mobile, JPMorgan Chase, Google, Apple, Denny's, Microsoft, Facebook, MetLife, Kroger, Bank of America, Delta, Walt Disney Co. , Kaiser Permanente, Hallmark, BMW.

Services Provided - NVBDC's services are three-fold:

- ① Certification - NVBDC certifies VOBs to help them with procurement opportunities with both corporate partners and government agencies.
- ② Networking & Development - NVBDC connects corporate professionals and VOBs through networking and training events.
- ③ Partners - NVBDC has a network of partners from corporations and government agencies to connect them with their certified VOBs.

Application - NVBDC's application is robust to ensure that VOBs meet all requirements in order to obtain certification.

Required for Veteran Applicants:

- ▶ Must have veteran status
- ▶ Must be at least 51% owned by veteran(s)
- ▶ Must share in all risk and profits commensurate with ownership interest
- ▶ Must provide proof of active management of business
- ▶ Must possess power to direct or cause to direct the management and policies of the business including dissolution or the sale of the company without restriction by any other party
- ▶ Contribution of capital and/or expertise by veteran owners to acquire their ownership interest shall be real and substantial and be in proportion of the interest acquired
- ▶ Must have the ability to perform in their area of specialty/expertise without substantial reliance on non-veteran-owned businesses

Fee - NVBDC assesses an application fee which is dependent upon a VOB's revenue. See the table below for pricing tiers.

REVENUE TIER	APPLICATION FEE
Less than \$1 million	\$350.00
\$1 million - \$4.99 million	\$600.00
\$5 million - \$9.99 million	\$900.00
\$10 million - \$19.99 million	\$1,200.00
\$20 million - \$49.99 million	\$1,500.00
\$100 million or greater	\$2,500.00

Timeline - NVBDC processes applications within approximately 60 days. NVBDC does, however, offer a FASTRACK option which expedites the process for VOBs who already have a certification from one of three other minority certifiers to 30 days.

- ▶ National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC)
- ▶ Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)
- ▶ National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC)

Required Documents - NVBDC requires several documents to include proof of citizenship, proof of veteran status, business ownership documentation, business management information, and financial information (some of which are required to be sent directly from the governing source). A full checklist of documentation can be found at <https://nvbdc.org/certification.html>.

Contact Information - NVBDC can be reached via the information below:

- ▶ National Veteran Business Development Council
325 Crescent Ln., Detroit, MI 48207
phone: 888-CERTIFIED
email: certification@nvbdc.org
website: <https://nvbdc.org>¹⁸

DISABILITY:IN

Organization Description - Disability:IN, formerly the US Business Leadership Network (USBLN), is a minority business certifier for all business owners with disabilities that seeks to help corporations with their disability inclusion efforts. This section will specifically focus on those criteria for disabled veterans.

Board - Disability:IN's board is comprised of a number of large corporations.

Corporate Partners - Disability:IN works with over 200 corporations to help them achieve disability inclusion and equality. Corporate partners are able to gain access to programming to help them diversify their businesses. Corporate partners include but not limited to: 3M, AARP, Accenture, Adobe, Aetna, AIG, Allstate, Amazon, American Airlines, Apple, Bae Systems, Bank of America, Boeing, Booz Allen Hamilton, Capital One, Chevron, Comcast, Cummins, CVS Health, Dell, Deloitte, Delta, ESPN, EY, Facebook, Fannie Mae, Fiserv, General Motors, Google, Hewlett Packard, Hilton, Humana, IBM, Intel, Johnson & Johnson, JPMorgan Chase, KPMG, L'Oreal, Lockheed Martin, Lowes, Marriott, Mastercard, McDonald's, MetLife, Merck, Microsoft, Northrop Grumman, Novartis, Oracle, P&G, PepsiCo, Pfizer, Prudential, Qualcomm, Raytheon, Shell, Sony, Southwest Airlines, Starbucks, TD Ameritrade, the Coca-Cola Company, TIAA, Toyota, Travelers, United Airlines, UPS, US Bank, USAA, Verizon, Walmart, the Walt Disney Company, Wells Fargo, and many more.

Services Provided - Disability:IN's services are three-fold:

- ① **Certification** - Disability:IN offers two-year national certifications which are recognized by several states and the Billion Dollar Roundtable. Disability:IN offers two certifications for VOBs--Veteran Disability-Owned Business Enterprise (V-DOBE) and Service-Disabled Veteran Disability-Owned Business Enterprise (SDV-DOBE).
- ② **Education & Information** - Disability:IN provides access to information about affiliated corporations, to include a business scholarship program, and a webinar series.
- ③ **Networking & Business Matchmaking** - Disability:IN connects professionals and business owners with corporate partners through several events. They also offer monthly teleconferences and bid opportunities.

Application - Disability:IN's application is robust to ensure that VOBs meet all requirements in order to obtain certification. If already verified by the SBA's VetCert program, the process is shortened.

Required for Veteran Applicants:

- ▶ Must be a veteran with a disability
- ▶ Must be at least 51% owned, controlled, operated and managed by a veteran with a disability
- ▶ Must be formed as a legal entity of the United States and provide proof of U.S. Citizenship or Permanent Resident Status
- ▶ Provide financial and tax documents
- ▶ Provide VA Verification Document
- ▶ Government Issued Picture ID
- ▶ Brief history of business

Fee - Disability:IN assesses an application fee based on processing time. See the table below for processing times and fees.

PROCESSING SPEED	APPLICATION FEE
Standard - 90 days	\$300.00
Expedited - 60 days	\$1,300.00
Expedited - 30 days	\$2,300.00

Timeline - Disability:IN's standard processing time for an application is 90 days, however, VOBs can pay a fee for applications to be processed faster - either 60 days or 30 days. If a VOB is certified by one of three other certifying bodies (listed below), application processing may be expedited.

- ▶ National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC)
- ▶ Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)
- ▶ National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC)

Required Documents - Disability:IN requires several documents to include proof of veteran status and proof of business ownership.

Contact Information - Disability:IN can be reached via the information below:

- ▶ Disability:IN
3000 Potomac Ave., Alexandria, VA 22305
Phone - 1-800-706-2710
Email - info@disabilityin.org
Website - <https://disabilityin.org>¹⁹

***Note** - it's important to highlight that Disability:IN only certifies disabled veteran-owned businesses in alignment with their focus, which would leave many veterans excluded if selected as the certifier of choice.

VETERAN SMALL BUSINESS CERTIFICATION (VETCERT) PROGRAM

Organization Description - The VetCert Program replaced the VA's Vets First Verification Program, previously managed by the Center for Verification and Evaluation (CVE). The VetCert Program is now administered by the Small Business Administration (SBA), ensuring that VOBs and SDVOSBs can compete for set-asides and procurement opportunities in the federal contracting space. This transition was established under the National Defense Authorization Act of 2021. The Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-461) allowed the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to give preferential contracting opportunities to businesses owned and operated by veterans and service-disabled veterans, and this continues under the VetCert program.

Services Provided - The VetCert Program provides three key services:

- ① **Certification** - The SBA offers two certification options for veteran-owned businesses: veteran-owned small businesses (VOSBs) and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSBs). These certifications afford VOBs preferential treatment in contract opportunities with the VA and other federal agencies. This program continues the legacy of giving veterans a competitive edge in the federal procurement space.
- ② **Legal Backing/Preference** - Federal procurement law mandates that certified VOBs receive contracting preferences over non-veteran businesses, as outlined in the Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-461) and subsequent legislation. This includes participation in set-aside opportunities and sole-source contracting.
- ③ **Protection** - The SBA ensures that only legitimate veteran-owned businesses benefit from this preference by maintaining strong safeguards. Fraudulent companies that falsely claim veteran-owned status can be reported through mechanisms established by the SBA, maintaining the integrity of the certification process.

Application - The VetCert application is thorough to ensure that VOBs meet all eligibility requirements to obtain certification. The process may include a detailed review of documentation and, in some cases, a site visit.

Required for Veteran Applicants:

- ▶ Must be 51% directly and unconditionally owned by one or more veterans
- ▶ Veteran(s) must have full control over the day-to-day management, decision making, and strategic policies of the business
- ▶ Veteran(s) must hold the highest position(s) within the business, devote full-time to the business, be the highest compensated employee(s), and have the ability to exercise independent business judgement

Fee - The SBA does not charge a fee for the VetCert application process.

Timeline - Average VetCert processing time prior to new system launch is 31 days.

Required Documents - The specific documentation required depends on the business structure. A complete list of required documents for certification can be found on the SBA's certification portal (see the next page).

Contact Information - - For assistance with the VetCert application process, the SBA provides multiple points of contact:

- ▶ Phone: 1-866-584-2344
- ▶ Email: vetcert@sba.gov. Call the dedicated toll-free call center at 800-862-8088, Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. ET (excludes federal holidays)
- ▶ Website: <https://veterans.certify.sba.gov>
- ▶ See their Frequently Asked Questions (<https://sbaone.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/VCKB/pages/2855665828/VetCert+Frequently+Asked+Questions>)

MYSBA CERTIFICATION PORTAL

Overview The [MySBA Certification Portal](#) is a user-friendly, centralized online platform provided by the Small Business Administration (SBA). It serves as the primary tool for small business owners to manage certifications, including the Veteran Small Business Certification (VetCert) and other SBA-related services. This portal simplifies the application process by consolidating all certification activities into one place, making it easier for veteran-owned small businesses (VOSBs) and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSBs) to navigate the federal procurement landscape.

Features of the MySBA Certification Portal:

- ▶ **Streamlined Application Process** - The portal offers a clear step-by-step guide for completing and submitting certification applications such as VetCert. It allows applicants to upload required documents, track the status of their application in real-time, and receive notifications on their application progress.
- ▶ **Certifications Available** - In addition to VetCert for veteran-owned businesses, the portal supports other certifications like 8(a) Business Development, HUBZone, and Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) certifications. Users can manage multiple certifications through a single interface.
- ▶ **Secure Access** - Business owners can securely log into the portal using their SBA credentials, ensuring the protection of sensitive business information. The portal adheres to federal cybersecurity standards to protect data and ensure privacy.
- ▶ **Document Management** - MySBA allows users to upload, store, and manage the necessary documentation required for certification. It ensures that the correct forms and materials are submitted based on the business structure, minimizing errors during the application process.
- ▶ **Application Tracking** - Once an application is submitted, business owners can track their application's status at each stage of the process, from document submission to final decision. The portal also allows for communication with SBA representatives to resolve any issues or requests for additional information.
- ▶ **Renewal Reminders** - MySBA provides automatic reminders for businesses to renew their certifications when the validity period is nearing expiration. This helps veteran-owned businesses maintain compliance without gaps in their certification status.

Who Should Use MySBA? - The portal is essential for:

- ▶ VOSBs and SDVOSBs seeking VetCert certification.
- ▶ Small businesses applying for or managing their SBA certifications, such as 8(a), HUBZone, or WOSB.

Accessing MySBA To access the MySBA Certification Portal, business owners can visit the SBA's main website and navigate to the certifications section. First-time users will need to create an account, while returning users can log in with their existing SBA credentials.

Contact Information for Support:

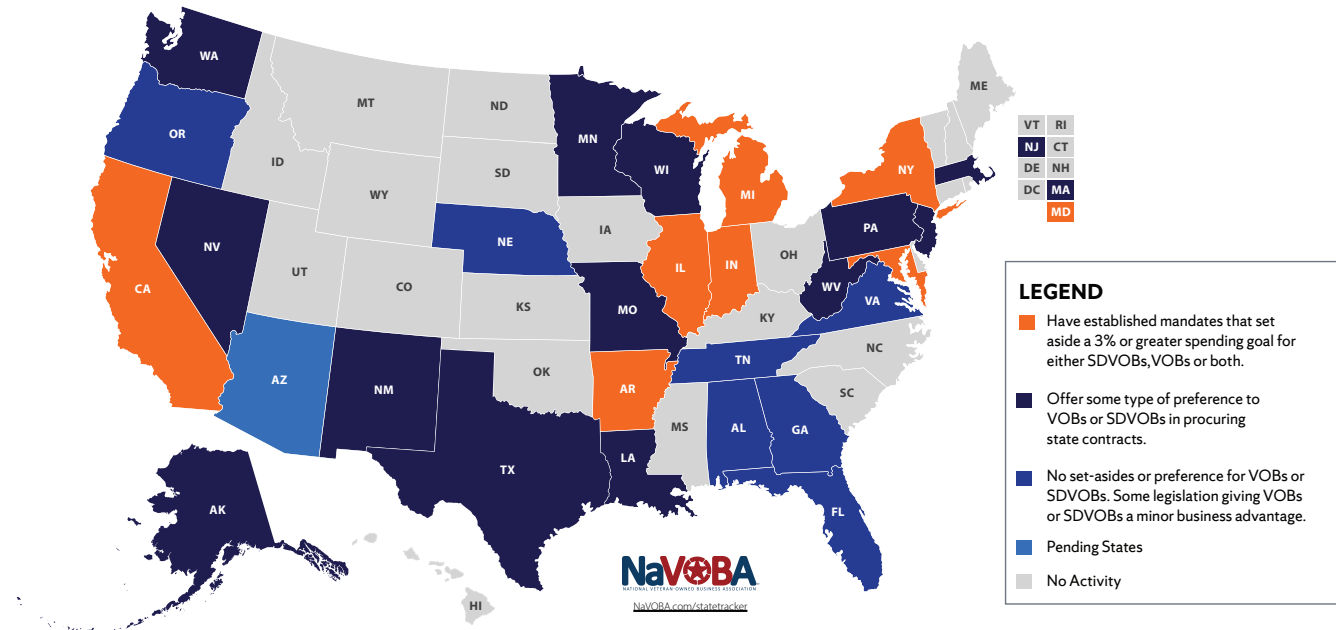
- ▶ Website: <https://certifications.sba.gov/>
- ▶ Email: certifications@sba.gov
- ▶ Phone: 1-866-443-4110

State Certifications

Many states have established their own certification process that is distinct and separate from a national certifying body. State certification is used as an alternative or in addition to a national-level certification for state-level procurement opportunities. In many of these states contract preference is given to diverse businesses, such as VOBs. Below is a map created by the CVOB that highlights certain states that have different certification options for VOBs. Please note that Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) may be inclusive of VOBs/SDVOBs and the map also includes those states that accept self-identification (self-certification).

LEGISLATION SPOTLIGHT

The following map his overview highlights state-level initiatives across the country, including established mandates with spending goals for SDVOBs and VOBs, procurement preferences, minor business advantages, and states with pending legislation related to veteran-owned businesses. Following the map is a table highlighting certain state's certification programs.*



* This list is not exhaustive.

(Adapted from National Veteran-Owned Business Association [NaVOBA], n.d.)

Arkansas

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Certification (MWBE)
<https://www.arkansasedc.com/community-resources/Minority-and-Women-Owned-Business-Enterprise-Resources/detail/get-certified>

REQUIREMENTS

- ▶ The majority owner(s) is of a designated group: Service-Disabled Veteran, African American, Hispanic American, American Indian, Asian American, Pacific Islander or Female.
- ▶ Applicant is at least 51 percent minority or women-owned, operated and managed on a daily basis.
- ▶ The business has been in operation for at least two (2) years prior to applying for minority or women-owned business status.
- ▶ Business has a legal presence (license) to operate in Arkansas.
- ▶ The majority owner(s) is a legal permanent resident of Arkansas.

- ▶ The majority owner(s) is a U.S. citizen.
- ▶ Applicant have Federal Transcripts showing proof of business income tax filings with the Internal Revenue Service and state income tax returns filed with the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration for the previous two (2) years.
- ▶ Enterprise is a for-profit business and generate less than \$10,000,000 in revenue

STATE BENEFITS

- ▶ Awards 5% of state contracts to Arkansas MWBE-certified companies
- ▶ MWBE Certification is granted for two years.

California

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Program (DVBE)
<https://www.dgs.ca.gov/PD/Services/Page-Content/Procurement-Division-Services-List-Folder/Certify-or-Re-apply-as-Small-Business-Disabled-Veteran-Business-Enterprise#@ViewBag.JumpTo>

REQUIREMENTS

- ▶ Service-Disabled Veterans must have a service-connected disability of at least 10 percent declared by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or the United States Department of Defense.
- ▶ The disabled veteran(s) who own the firm must be domiciled in California.
- ▶ Disabled veterans must have an established business that is operational and active prior to submission of an application.
- ▶ Daily business operations must be managed and controlled by one or more disabled veterans. The disabled veteran(s) who managed and controls the business is not required to be the disabled veteran business owner(s).
- ▶ Principal office must be located in California and cannot be a branch or subsidiary of a foreign corporation, foreign firm, or other foreign-based business

STATE BENEFITS

- ▶ Awards 3% of state contracts to DVBE-certified companies

Connecticut

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Veteran-Owned Micro Business
<https://portal.ct.gov/dva/knowledge-base/articles/advocacy-and-assistance/state-veterans-resources/veteran-owned-micro-business-certification>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ “Veteran-owned micro business” means a micro business of which at least 51% of the ownership is held by one or more veterans, as defined in Conn. Gen. Stat. subsection (a) of section 27-103. “Micro business” means a business with gross revenues not exceeding three million dollars in the most recently completed fiscal year.
- ▶ Complete and sign application form (CTVOMB -1) on second page of this document.
- ▶ Provide proof of honorable military service (e.g. DD Form 214 or other documentation if DD Form 214 is unavailable).
- ▶ Provide proof of current Registration as Business with CT Secretary of the State.
- ▶ Provide documentation establishing the percentage of Veteran ownership of the business.(e.g. business plan, operating agreement, meeting minutes, shares report, stock certificate breakdown, tax forms with ownership per cent.

- ▶ Provide proof of annual gross income for most recent fiscal year (e.g. CT state income tax return, audited financial statement).

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ Connecticut VOMBs are afforded a 15% price preference in the determination of the lowest responsible qualified bidder
- ▶ The Certification is valid for one year or until such time as the business is no longer in compliance with the statutory requirements, which ever occurs first.

Delaware

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Office of Supplier Diversity (OSD) Certification, Veteran Owned Business Enterprise (VOBE), Service Disabled Veteran Owned Business Enterprise (SDVOBE) <https://business.delaware.gov/osd/cert>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Applicant is the owner and operator of 51% or more veteran, service disabled veteran, minority, women, or individual(s) with disability.
- ▶ U.S. Citizen or Permanent Resident

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ State-certified small businesses are eligible to be listed in the State of Delaware online Directory of Certified Businesses, which is hosted on the Office of Supplier Diversity webpage and is available to the government and public
- ▶ Certifications of all types are a three-year certification, unless your company's eligibility status changes. Companies are able to apply for recertification.

Florida

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Veteran Business Enterprise (VBE) within the Certified Business Enterprise (CBE) program https://www.dms.myflorida.com/agency_administration/office_of_supplier_diversity_osd/get_certified

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Be legally registered to do business in Florida state.
- ▶ Be based in Florida.
- ▶ Owned and managed by a resident of Florida.
- ▶ At least 51% owned and managed by a veteran.
- ▶ Engaged in commercial transactions.
- ▶ Be registered in MyFloridaMarketPlace.
- ▶ Have a net worth of less than \$5 million.
- ▶ Have 200 or fewer full-time perm. Employees.
- ▶ Have a professional license, if required by industry, in the name of vet owner.

STATE BENEFITS:

Referrals to state agencies and other organizations seeking certified businesses; listing in OSD's Certified Business Enterprise Vendor director; exclusive emails containing contract and networking opportunities, special events, and training announcements; free online recertification every two years.

Illinois

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Veterans Business Program (VBP) <https://cei.illinois.gov/programs0/veterans-business-program.html>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ At least 51% owned by one or more qualified service disabled veteran or veterans living in Illinois.
- ▶ Applicant(s) must have valid DD214.
- ▶ Annual gross sales of less than \$75 million.
- ▶ Home office is in Illinois.

STATE BENEFITS:

Illinois state agencies and universities are encouraged to spend at least 3% of their procurement budgets with VBP-certified businesses

Indiana

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Indiana Veteran Owned Small Business Program (IVOSB) www.in.gov/idoa/3064.htm

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Company is at least 51% owned by a veteran.
- ▶ Veteran has control and manages the day to day operations.
- ▶ Has at least one of the following: pays the majority of payroll to residents of Indiana, employs Indiana residents as a majority of employees, makes a significant capital investment in Indiana, or has headquarters in the state of Indiana; Veteran under IC 5-22-14-2.5.
- ▶ Principal place of business is in the State of Indiana as defined by 25 IAC 9-2-1.
- ▶ DD214 or NGB-22 or proof of current active duty.
- ▶ W-9 -State issued ID.

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ Awards 3% of state contracts to IVOSB-certified companies

Iowa

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Targeted Small Business Program (TSB) www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/tsb

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ 51% or more owned and operated by a service disabled veteran, female, minority, individual with a disability.
- ▶ Owned and Managed in the state of Iowa.
- ▶ For-profit making less than \$4 million in gross income.
- ▶ Computed as an average of the preceding three fiscal years.

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ All Iowa state agencies are required to establish annual TSB spending projections and report quarterly TSB performance goals
- ▶ Access to bid notification site to view state procurement opportunities 48 hours in advance of posting to the state's public site
- ▶ TSB-certified businesses are listed in the online Targeted Small Business Directory, which is used by public and private buyers across the state
- ▶ Invitation to TSB networking and TSB-exclusive events, including workshops, webinars, and other events
- ▶ Business promotion as a Certified TSB utilizing the TSB badge on social media, website and marketing channels

Kansas

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Disabled Veteran Owned Business Certification
<https://portal.kansas.gov> (Search Veteran Business-docx item)
<https://admin.ks.gov/offices/procurement-and-contracts/certified-business-and-disabled-veteran-owned-businesses>

REQUIREMENTS:

A "Disabled Veteran Owned Business" is a business certified annually by the Department of Administration that is a sole Proprietorship, partnership, association or corporation domiciled in Kansas, or any corporation, even if wholly owned subsidiary of a foreign corporation, and is verified by the Commission on Veteran's Affairs that not less than 51% is owned by one or more disabled veterans or, in the case of a publicly owned business, not less than 51% of the stock owned by one or more disabled veterans, the management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more disabled veterans and such business maintains these requirements during the entire contract term.

Kentucky

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) <https://finance.ky.gov/office-of-the-secretary/office-of-equal-employment-opportunity-contract-compliance/sdvosb/Pages/default.aspx>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ 51% or more owned by a veteran.
- ▶ Owner is a resident of Kentucky.
- ▶ Business is based in Kentucky.
- ▶ Business is independently owned and operated.
- ▶ Small business.
- ▶ Operated for at least 1 year.
- ▶ Completed at least 1 year of taxes

STATE BENEFITS:

- Marketing opportunities through networks such as Kentucky's Small Business Connection Portal and the Small Business Administration

Louisiana

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Louisiana Veteran Initiative (LAVETBIZ) <https://www.opportunitylouisiana.gov/program/veteran-initiative>
- ▶ Louisiana Veterans First Business Initiative (Registration) <https://laveteransfirst.org/>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ At least 51% of the business must be owned by a veteran.
- ▶ The company's headquarters must be in Louisiana.
- ▶ The company must have fewer than 50 full-time employees.
- ▶ Average annual gross receipts must not exceed \$6 million for non-construction and \$10 million for construction companies.
- ▶ The business must be independently owned and operated.
- ▶ The business must not be dominant in its professional field.
- ▶ Must be a resident in Louisiana.
- ▶ Must be owned by and have officers who are U.S. citizens or legal residents.

STATE BENEFITS:

LAVETBIZ-certified businesses can receive up to 1.2% evaluation points when bidding on RFPs through the state of Louisiana. Contractors who use the veteran business as a subcontractor will also be eligible to receive additional percentage points on their bid.

Maryland

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Veteran-Owned Small Business Enterprise (VSBE) <https://www.opportunitylouisiana.gov/program/veteran-initiative>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Businesses must be registered as a vendor on the state's e-Procurement platform, eMaryland Marketplace Advantage (eMMA).
- ▶ Veteran status must be verified by one of the following entities: Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs or U.S. Small Business Administration's Veteran Small Business Certification (VetCert)

STATE BENEFITS:

Maryland's VSBE Program provides contracting opportunities on state-funded procurements for qualified veteran-owned small businesses. Sixty-five agencies/departments are directed to spend at least 1% of the total dollar value of their procurement contracts either directly (prime contractors) or indirectly (subcontractors) with certified VSBE firms. Only the work of a certified VSBE firm can be counted toward meeting an established VSBE contract goal

Massachusetts

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise Program (SDVOBEP) <https://www.mass.gov/administrative-bulletin/service-disabled-veteran-owned-business-enterprise-program-guidelines-af-21>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Must be registered as a service-disabled veteran-owned business through VetBiz Database.
- ▶ It is the responsibility of the awarding agency to verify the status of the service-disabled veteran-owned business enterprise via said VetBiz database, located at <https://vetbiz.va.gov>.
- ▶ Only a service-disabled veteran-owned business enterprise identified as a service-disabled veteran-owned small business (SDVOB) via the VetBiz database shall count towards meeting the Program participation goal.

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ SDVOBs certified through the Massachusetts SDVOBEP program are permitted to participate in MA's supplier diversity program (SDP)
- ▶ Contracts valued above \$150k are reviewed to maximize SDP participations (as primes and subs)
- ▶ Benchmark for SDVOBEP is 3% of annual spending

Michigan

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Preference (SDVOB) <https://www.michigan.gov/dtmb/procurement/contractconnect/programs-and-policies/Preferences/service-disabled-veteran-owned-business-preference>
- ▶ Michigan does not have a state-specific certification process for veteran-owned businesses. Instead, it recognizes certifications from established organizations such as the National Veteran Business Development Council (NVBDC). <https://www.sbam.org/certification-of-service-disabled-and-veteran-owned-businesses/>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Businesses seeking the SDVOB procurement preference in Michigan must indicate their SDVOB status in their bid response and provide the required documentation, including:
 - Proof of service and discharge conditions (e.g., DD 214)
 - Proof of service-connected disability (e.g., VA Rating Decision letter)
 - Proof of ownership (documentation verifying veteran ownership of at least 51%)
- ▶ Alternatively, businesses can provide certification through an organization like NVBDC to verify eligibility for the SDVOB preference.

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ SDVOB-certified businesses in Michigan may receive a procurement preference when bidding on state contracts, offering a competitive advantage. Michigan has established a goal of awarding 5% of total state expenditures for goods, services, and construction to qualified service-disabled veteran-owned companies.

Minnesota

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Veteran Owned Small Business (VOSB) Program
<https://mn.gov/mdva/resources/employment/veteransasbusinessowners.jsp>
<https://mn.gov/admin/business/vendor-info/oep/sbcp/vo/>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Must be verified by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs as a veteran as specified in state statute (provide DD-214 and/or summary of benefits letter from USVA) or as a Veteran with a service-connected disability determined by the US Department of Veteran Affairs.
- ▶ Company is at least 51% owned by a veteran.
- ▶ Veteran must control and manage daily operations.

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ Minnesotan VOSB-certified businesses may be eligible for up to 12% preference in selling their products or services or bidding on construction projects to the state
- ▶ Minnesota “has the authority” to set goals which require prime contracts to subcontract a portion of the work to VOSB-certified businesses on contracts for construction or consulting services

Missouri

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Missouri Service-Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (SDVE) <https://oeo.mo.gov/sdve-certification-program/>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ The business must be at least 51% owned and controlled by one or more service-disabled veterans.
- ▶ The service-disabled veteran(s) must have a service-connected disability as determined by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
- ▶ Be doing business as a Missouri firm, corporation, or individual, or maintaining a Missouri office or place of business, and
- ▶ The business must be a for-profit entity and operate independently

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ 3% of all contracts for the performance of any job or service to qualified service-disabled veteran business enterprises (SDVEs)
- ▶ 3 bonus point preference may be granted to a vendor who meets the requirements of a SDVE on bids/proposals for the performance of any job or service

New Jersey

CERTIFYING BODY:

Veteran Owned Small Business (VOB) and Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses (DVOB)

<https://business.nj.gov/pages/vob-dvob>

REQUIREMENTS:

Veteran-Owned Business (VOB)

- ▶ Company's principle place of business is in the state of New Jersey
- ▶ Independently owned and operated by the Veteran.
- ▶ At least 51% of the business is owned and controlled by persons who are veterans.
- ▶ The Principal Owner must provide copy of their Federal Form DD-214 indicating honorable discharge or release under honorable circumstances.

Disabled Veterans-Owned Business (DVOB)

- ▶ Company's principle place of business is in the state of New Jersey.
- ▶ Independently owned and operated by the Veteran.
- ▶ At least 51% of the business is owned and controlled by persons who are disabled veterans.
- ▶ Company must be officially verified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business for the purposes of department contracts pursuant to Federal law

STATE BENEFITS:

Certified businesses will be registered in the New Jersey Selective Assistance Vendor Information (NJSAVI) database, which identifies businesses eligible for mandated state programs such as the NJ Small Business Set Aside Program, and aids in matching buyers and vendors for private contracting opportunities.

New Mexico

CERTIFYING BODY:

Veteran Preference Business/Contractor Certification Validation:

<http://www.tax.newmexico.gov/Businesses/in-state-veteran-preference-certification.aspx>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Licensed to do business in New Mexico
- ▶ The (majority) owner of the business have paid property taxes or rent on real property in the State of New Mexico
- ▶ The (majority) owner of the business have paid at least one other tax administered by the State of New Mexico
- ▶ Annual revenue documentation
- ▶ Documentation proving that a veteran or veterans own a majority of the business
- ▶ Submit application for Resident Veteran Business Certification

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ Five percent of the total weight of all the factors used in evaluating the proposals; and
- ▶ The equivalent of five percent of total points if the state contract is awarded on a point-based system.

New York

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Business (SDVOB) Certification
<https://ogs.ny.gov/veterans/service-disabled-veteran-owned-business-certification>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ At least 51% owned by one or more service-disabled veterans with a disability rating of 10% or more.
- ▶ Service-disabled veteran ownership must be real, substantial, and continuing.
- ▶ The eligible service-disabled veteran owner(s) must have (and exercise) authority to independently control the day-to-day business decisions.
- ▶ The business must qualify as a small business under the New York State program (The business is independently owned and operated, The business has no more than 300 employees and has a significant business presence in the state but is not dominant in the field).
- ▶ The business must be located in New York State or have a significant business presence in New York State

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ A goal of 6% of procurement expenditures to be made with SDVOBs by state agencies, public authorities, and public benefit corporations

Ohio

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Veteran-Friendly Business Enterprise Program (VBE) <https://ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/site/business/resources/vbe>

REQUIREMENTS:

In order to be eligible for certification, the applicant business must satisfy one of the following criteria:

- ▶ Company is at least 51% owned by a veteran or persons on active service.
- ▶ If the applicant business is a corporation 51% of which is not owned by veterans or persons on active service, at least 51% of the board of directors are veterans or persons on active service.
- ▶ At least 10% of its employees are veterans or on active service.
- ▶ The business is certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) or a Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB) and the owner(s) of the business meets the definition of veteran as defined in Rule 123:5-1-01(II) of the Ohio Administrative Code.

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ Prices on bids submitted by VBE-certified to exceed those prices on bids submitted by non-VBEs by up to 5% and still be eligible for winning the award
- ▶ Scores on proposals submitted by VBE-certified to be up to 5% lower than the proposal scores submitted by non-VBEs and still be eligible for winning the award

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Service Disabled Veteran (SDV) Certification <https://www.oregon.gov/biz/programs/cobid/sdv/pages/default.aspx>

REQUIREMENTS:

The business must:

- ▶ Be for-profit.
- ▶ Be registered with the Oregon Secretary of State.
- ▶ Have gross annual receipts (3-year average) not exceeding \$30.72 million.

Business owner must:

- ▶ Be a U.S. citizen or lawfully admitted.
- ▶ Permanent resident of Oregon.
- ▶ Own and control 51% or more of the business.
- ▶ Control and manage day-to-day operations
- ▶ Have proper licensing (e.g., engineer, plumber, etc.)
- ▶ Have made a contribution of capital.

The business owner also should expect a phone interview as well as possible site visit, which includes office, shop, and job site when applicable

STATE BENEFITS:

Opportunity to bid on goal orientated contracts (federal, state, county, and city government projects; large firms have programs and policies designed to engage and foster utilization of certified firms)

- ▶ Awards on projects that do not have a goal (\$10,000 direct award - state; \$50,000 professional services)
- ▶ Opportunities targeted toward emerging small businesses (\$100,000 direct award through ODOT's Small Contracting Program Emergency response list)
- ▶ Connecting to prime contracting
- ▶ Networking opportunities and events
- ▶ Exposure - marketing tool
- ▶ Education opportunities
- ▶ Mentorship programs

Rhode Island

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ No specific certification for veteran businesses, but may qualify for and could apply for MBE or WBE certification
<https://dedi.ri.gov/divisions-units/minority-business-enterprise-compliance-office/veteran-business-enterprise-vbe-0>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ A small business concern which is at least fifty-one percent (51%) owned and controlled by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged individuals or in the case of a publicly owned business, at least fifty-one (51%) of the stock of which is owned by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged individuals; and whose management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more such individuals.

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ Competitive edge with contracting opportunities

Tennessee

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Governor's Office of Diversity Business Enterprise (Go-DBE):
<https://www.tn.gov/generalservices/procurement/central-procurement-office--cpo-/go-dbe.html>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ At least 20% military-connected disability
- ▶ Is at least fifty-one percent (51%) owned and controlled by one (1) or more service-disabled veterans
- ▶ Business should be independently owned and operated.
- ▶ Must be a for-profit business which serves a commercially useful function.
- ▶ Applicants must submit a signed copy of the most recent federal Tax Return (including all schedules) in order to verify ownership and control.
- ▶ Owner must present copy of their Department of Defense (DD) Form 214
- ▶ Owner must present copy of Adjudication letter from the Veterans Administration
- ▶ Business must be located in the State of Tennessee

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ The Tennessee General Assembly passed legislation to increase state procurement opportunities where state agencies are required to actively solicit bids and proposals from service-disabled veteran-owned businesses.

Texas

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Texas Veterans Commission <https://www.tvc.texas.gov/entrepreneurs/>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Must be veterans of the U.S. Military and National Guard/Reserves
- ▶ Businesses that maintain a minimum of 51% veteran ownership and management control
- ▶ Businesses that are actively operating in Texas
- ▶ Required documents include: SOS registration letter with filing number (if appropriate), veteran verification documents, ownership verification, county DBA document (if appropriate)

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ Allows veterans to differentiate their business in the marketplace
- ▶ Included in portal listings
- ▶ Consulting support

Virginia

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Small, Women-owned, and Minority-Owned Business (SWaM) <https://www.sbsd.virginia.gov/certification-division/swam/>; Service Disabled Veteran-Owned status <https://sbsd.virginia.gov/certification-division/service-disabled-veterans/>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Veterans who are small business owners can obtain Service Disabled Veteran-owned “status” in the SWaM vendor database. This is not a separate certification; it is a designation of those businesses that are owned by Service Disabled Veterans who are certified as such by the Virginia Department of Veteran Services.
- ▶ Veterans wishing to apply for service disabled veteran status must first seek eligibility certification from the Department of Veteran Services by calling (804) 786-0286 or visiting the DVS website at www.virginiaforveterans.com.
- ▶ Veterans can apply for small, women-owned or minority-owned certification with the Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity before or after obtaining an eligibility certificate from DVS. Both services are available at no charge

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ Virginia awards 40% of state contracts to SWaM-certified companies, and set-aside program exists to support goal

Washington

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Veterans and Servicemember Owned Business Certification <https://www.dva.wa.gov/program/veteran-owned-business-certification>

REQUIREMENTS:

First, register the business in WEBS then send in the certification documentation.

- ▶ Proof of Honorable Veteran Status (copy of 1 of the following items): DD214 member 4 copy, Retired VA ID Card, Retirement Certificate, Discharge Certificate - or if currently serving your military ID, badge, recent paystub, or letter on military letterhead.
- ▶ Proof of 51% ownership. (copy of 1 of the following items): Master Business application, business plan, operating agreement, meeting minutes, shares report, stock certificate breakdown, tax forms with ownership %, or if sole proprietorship your business license. If a community property or 2 veteran 50/50 split you are eligible as long as the veteran maintains day to day operational control of the business.
- ▶ Proof the business is a Washington State Enterprise which is defined as an enterprise which is incorporated in the state of Washington as a Washington domestic corporation, or an enterprise whose principal place of business is located within the state of Washington for enterprises which are not incorporated.

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ Washington state agencies are encouraged to award 5% of their contracts to Certified Veterans and Servicemember Owned Businesses

West Virginia

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Veteran Owned Business (VOB) Certification <https://sos.wv.gov/business/Pages/VetOwnBusWaiver.aspx>

REQUIREMENTS:

A veteran-owned business is defined as a business that is:

- ▶ At least 51% unconditionally owned by one or more veterans or in the case of a publicly owned business.
- ▶ At least 51% of the stock is unconditionally owned by one or more veterans.

The applicant(s) must provide proof of honorable discharge or proof of discharge under honorable conditions by submitting a copy of their Veteran Affairs Form DD214 along with their initial business registration application.

STATE BENEFITS:

West Virginia VOB-certified are afforded a 3.5% price preference in the determination of the lowest responsible qualified bidder

CERTIFYING BODY:

- ▶ Disabled Veteran-Owned Business (DVB) Certification <https://supplierdiversity.wi.gov/Pages/DVB/ProgramDescription.aspx>

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ At least 51% owned, controlled, and actively managed by an identified service-disabled veteran and serve a useful business function. The service-disabled veteran owner has demonstrated that they: 1) Have a certificate of release or discharge from active duty (Form DD214); 2) Reside in Wisconsin; and 3) Have a disability rating of at least 0% with the Department of Veteran's Affairs or an Armed Services Branch.
- ▶ Submission of various documents, including Wisconsin driver's license, proof of citizenship, bank signature cards, tax returns, financial statements, and DD Form 214.

STATE BENEFITS:

- ▶ Wisconsin DVB-certified businesses are eligible for a 5% procurement preference on state purchases



Non-Certification Options

SELF-IDENTIFICATION (SELF-CERTIFICATION) & DATABASE REGISTRATION

Although an informal means of “certification,” it is widely prevalent for VOBs to include their veteran status on their website and marketing materials without formal certification. Self-identification, often referred to as self-certification, is not recognized by most corporations or states. However, there is nothing prohibiting VOBs from including this designation on public-facing platforms as a means of advertisement, self-promotion, or self-publicization. VOBs may decide that a formal certification is not necessary for the type of business they own or the type of business they do with the general public. Adding their veteran status to their site may help with organic advertising efforts. It is important to note, however, that self-certified VOBs are typically not counted towards supplier diversity goals by corporations or government agencies as they have not been formally verified by a third-party certifier.

Georgia

CERTIFYING BODY:

Self-Certify

REQUIREMENTS:

<https://www.georgiasbdc.org/vets-and-federal-contracting-business-opportunities/>

Pennsylvania

CERTIFYING BODY:

Self-Certify

REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Has requirements on how to self-certify, utilizes third party certification.
- ▶ Has general guidelines of the business:
 - Must be a for-profit, United States business;
 - The business must be independently owned;
 - The business may not be dominant in its field of operation;
 - The business may not employ more than 100 full-time equivalent employees;
 - The business may not exceed three-year average gross revenues of \$47 Million, regardless of business type

<https://www.dgs.pa.gov/Small%20Diverse%20Business%20Program/Pages/Small-Veteran-Business.aspx>



VETERAN-LED - GROW WITH GOOGLE

Organization Description - Veteran small business owners can now identify their business as owned, led, or founded by veterans by adding a “Veteran-Led” attribute to their business profile on Google, which will show up when people look for the business on Google Search and Maps. Click here to learn more about Veteran-Led and how to enable the attribute: <https://grow.google/veteranled/>.

Affiliate Members - Patriot Boot Camp, Bunker Labs, and Veteran Capital have partnered with Google for Startups to support military-affiliated business owners.

Services Provided - From helping vets find jobs and improving ways to work remotely to highlighting Veteran-Led business on Google Search and Maps, Google helps transitioning service members, veterans, and military spouses grow their careers and businesses. In addition to the “Veteran-Led” attribute, Google also offers the following support and services for military-connected business owners:

- ▶ Skills Training- The Primer app offers business and marketing minicourses for veteran and military spouses.
- ▶ Market Identification - Market Finder helps businesses that are interested in international expansion to find new markets suited to the product or service.
- ▶ Additional Training and Resources - Through a partnership with the Rosie Network, Grow with Google’s training and resources are available to Rosie Chapters across the country.

AMAZON BADGE

Organization Description - Veteran and military family entrepreneurs can now identify their products as associated with veteran leadership through Amazon’s “Military Family-Owned” Badge. This badge is designed to help customers easily recognize and support businesses owned by veterans, active-duty service members, and their families when shopping on Amazon. By enabling this badge, veteran-led businesses can improve their visibility and reach to a broader, socially conscious customer base. Learn more about how to enable the badge: <https://sellercentral.amazon.com/> (also see <https://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=GED7RL944YMQ8CE3>)

Affiliate Members - Amazon partners with organizations such as Patriot Boot Camp, Bunker Labs, and Veteran Capital to support military-affiliated business owners by providing access to resources, mentorship, and training to help grow their businesses.

Services Provided - Through Amazon’s platform, veteran and military family entrepreneurs are offered the following services:

- ▶ Badge Display - The Military Family-Owned Badge enables entrepreneurs to highlight their veteran-owned or military family-owned status, increasing customer trust and potentially boosting sales.
- ▶ Marketplace Support - Amazon provides tools and services to help veteran-led businesses expand their reach, including enhanced seller support, access to Amazon’s large customer base, and integration with advertising tools to promote their products.
- ▶ Business Training and Resources - Amazon partners with organizations that provide training, mentorship, and guidance on growing a business through its platform, ensuring military-affiliated entrepreneurs have the support they need to succeed.



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