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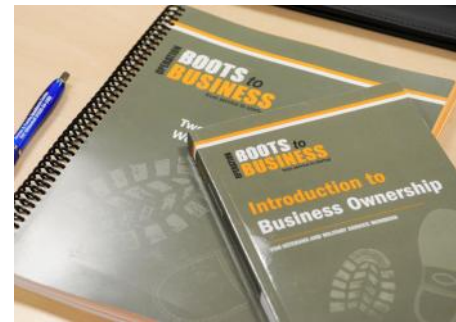
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Veterans Get Break on Contract, Vendor Bids

By *Finance New Mexico*

Business-savvy veterans already know the benefits of becoming a federal government contractor.

Through initiatives like the U.S. Small Business Administration's Boots to Business program, active-duty service members who are transitioning from military to civilian life and want to launch or build a business receive training in the basics of being an entrepreneur. And they learn about special low-interest loans, veterans' preferences and other resources designed to help former military personnel succeed in the business world.



The state of New Mexico also offers help to returning vets who aspire to become their own bosses. For the crucial first 10 years of its life, a certified veteran-owned business can receive a discount on bids for state contracts.

Leveling the Playing Field

The state's procurement code was amended this year — and the changes took effect in July — to simplify the formula used to discount bids made by registered veteran-owned businesses.

The state once applied a range of discounts to bids made by these businesses so the veteran owner had a better shot at competing with civilian contractors whose businesses got a head-start while others served in active military duty. The old formula was a sliding scale that varied up to 10 percent depending on the business's size and revenues.

Under the amended law, the public agency calling for bids must consider a bid submitted by a resident veteran-owned business with \$3 million or less in gross income to be 10 percent lower than the actual bid.

The preference doesn't apply to contracts that include federal funding. And it only applies to veteran-owned businesses that get certification for a resident veteran business preference or a resident veteran contractor preference.

How to Proceed

Veterans interested in contracting with the state should begin by contacting the New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center (NMVBOC), where they can get help applying to the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department (TRD) for a resident veteran business preference certificate or resident veteran contractor preference certificate. Both certificates give them a competitive advantage in a formal bid process or formal request for proposal process for the sale of goods or services to a New Mexico state or local public body.

As long as the contractor initially meets the necessary requirements and continues to maintain eligibility, the discount certificate is valid for 10 years from the date it was issued. The contractor must submit a new application if its status has changed or its veteran ownership has changed to become less than 51 percent.

When bidding on a contract, the veteran-owned vendor must include a copy of a valid resident veteran contractor certificate.

Where to Get Help

For questions about how to apply for certification, veterans can call the New Mexico Tax and Revenue Service at 505-827-0951. Information about the certification and the Boots to Business programs can be found at the Veterans Business Outreach Center. Visit <http://nmvbo.org> or call 505-383-2403.

Veterans can also get individual counseling at one of seven Procurement Technical Assistance Program offices in the state. PTAP is a government-funded program that provides workshops, training and counseling to help small businesses successfully compete for government contracts. The NCAIED PTAC is a similar program specifically for Native American Veterans. Visit <http://www.nmptap.org> or <http://ptac.ncaied.org> for more information.

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