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Conference Enlightens Veterans About Business Opportunities, Resources

By Finance New Mexico

Veterans come to the private-sector workforce with a lot to offer, including advanced training in specialized fields such as logistics, security, information technology, personnel management and administration. They understand the complexities of doing business with the U.S. government and the importance of following instructions and protocol.



Veterans have a mission-driven mind-set and work well under pressure. They appreciate the need for teamwork and leadership.

Once they retire from military service, vets can use these skill and experiences to secure good private-sector jobs. But many prefer to re-enter the civilian workforce as their own bosses.

Sharing Intel

To raise awareness of the business opportunities and programs for veterans, the U.S. Small Business Administration's Veterans Business Outreach Center in New Mexico is sponsoring the Southwest Veterans Business Conference on April 1 in Albuquerque. The conference is oriented toward vets who are contemplating business ownership and those who are launching or building a business.

Participants will hear from a variety of experts and service providers at panel discussions and whole-group gatherings. In between, they can attend workshops and breakout sessions on a variety of themes that match their interests and needs.

Some of what they learn at these huddles might be new to them, such as the basics of being an entrepreneur in the Southwest, how to choose a business structure and how to do financial planning for business. They'll hear about special low-interest loans and other resources designed to help them succeed.

But other topics exploit lessons from the military experience: Breakout sessions on franchise opportunities, working with prime contractors and doing business with government bodies, for instance, tap into the types of structured procedures the military follows when purchasing from private contractors or conducting real or simulated campaigns.

At a “Learn During Lunch” forum, fellow veterans who have built successful businesses share lessons and strategies. One of these is Chris Sweetin, a retired Air Force master sergeant who built 3D Security Training Solutions into New Mexico’s largest security-training organization. Sweetin attributes much of his success to the [SBA’s Boots to Business training program](#), which leverages the agency’s resource partners — Small Business Development Centers, Women’s Business Centers and SCORE — to help service members start a small business or otherwise find self-employment in their post-military life.

Ready to Hire

Several agencies and institutions helping to underwrite the conference are sending representatives to talk about current and future employment and contracting opportunities; they’ll also be available throughout the day for individual discussions. These key sponsors are Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories, the City of Albuquerque and FranNet, an organization that matches parent companies with potential franchisees.

The free conference runs from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Albuquerque Marriott Pyramid, 5151 San Francisco Road N.E. Out-of-towners with military credentials get reduced rates at the hotel (\$89 plus tax); reservations at 800-262-2043.

For a full conference agenda and list of speakers, visit the website of the New Mexico Veterans Business Outreach Center at <http://nmvbo.org>.

Finance New Mexico is a public service initiative to assist individuals and businesses with obtaining skills and funding resources for their business or idea. To learn more, go to www.FinanceNewMexico.org. Sponsored by:

