

Boots to Business Funding Opportunity Frequently Asked Questions



1. Are county/local government agencies -- not a higher education institution -- eligible to apply?

Yes, county, local, and tribal government agencies are eligible to apply.

**2. Does the person applying for the grant below have to be a veteran? or the company owned by a veteran?
Do you need a Duns # to apply for this grant?**

All applicants will need to be registered in SAM.gov to gain access to program announcements. A part of that registration process requires that the applicant have a DUNS number which can be requested from the SAM.gov portal. Please note that SAM.gov registration may take two to four or more weeks for confirmation that your organization has been officially registered. There is no preference for veteran-owned organizations for this funding opportunity.

3. How many awards/awardees are anticipated in the upcoming B2B NOFA?

As stated in the original call for Statements of Interest (SOI), the SBA Office of Veterans Business Development (OVBD) expects to make between one and four awards. Depending on the capabilities of prospective applicants and program requirements, OVBD may make awards for all or a portion of the requirements.

4. Can OVBD enter into cooperative agreement(s) with a private or for-profit firm?

Yes, the SBA can enter into cooperative agreements with private or for-profit firms. These entities will be held to the same requirements as non-profit cooperative agreement partners. The SBA has the discretion to apply the OMB supercircular to for-profit applicants.

5. Can new entities who previously did not administer the B2B program apply?

All eligible entities with experience and capabilities to carry out the program requirements listed in the B2B Announcement are encouraged to apply. An entity does not have to possess previous experience administering the B2B program, but should demonstrate some small business acumen in developing and instruction curriculum.

6. If an organization has no experience with entrepreneur trainings, can they still have a strong application based on capacity?

OVBD expects partner organizations to meet the needs of the audience (transitioning service members, veterans, and military spouses interested in starting a small business) within 30 days of award. OVBD expects partners to be aware and knowledgeable of all entrepreneurial support services available through the SBA and its resource partners and guide aspiring clients how to access those services. Demonstrating small business acumen and experience working with the veteran population are key requirements of successful applications.

7. Does the proposal have to adhere to the B2B curriculum or can it be a new curriculum?

A new curriculum is allowable, as long as it meets the requirements of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and the learning objectives of the course. Applicants should be prepared to include in their proposals the efficacy and measures of effectiveness of their suggested approach(es). The B2B 2-day and follow-on course curriculum outlines can be found in the "Related Document" tab in the in the grants announcement on grants.gov.

8. Will you accept proposals from a joint venture or partnership; for example, from a Veteran Owned Small Business, and a non-profit organization that supports Veterans?

Yes, the technical proposal can include partnerships/collaboration from multiple organizations; however, the proposal must identify a primary organization or staff that will be responsible for the project performance and fiscal requirements of the award. Technical and budget proposals will need to adhere to federal regulations and policies pertaining to sub-granting of funds.

9. Will there be a period of transition once the award has been made or is it the expectation that the awardee will have all curriculum created, instructors hired, etc in 30 days?

OVBD expects all recipient organizations to have their programs operational within 30 days of the issuance of the award. Our goal is to have the awards issued by April 1, 2017.

10. Whether there is interest in making the intro course into an online offering, or if the expectation is that it remain face-to-face?

The SBA—along with its interagency Transition Assistance Program (TAP) partners -- has found the optimal method of delivering training to be face-to-face. TAP policies require training be provided in a classroom setting on military installations. If service members are unable to access a classroom-based course, an online version is available via the Defense Department's Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) platform.

11. Is the SBA planning to continue to use the "Foundations" curriculum, with enhancements, or is it open to new curriculum and learning formats?

The Foundations follow-on course provides participants knowledge on most aspects of business ownership and management and provides individual guidance to participants in the development of their business plans. SBA seeks follow-on training that maintains these core objectives but is open to innovative approaches, curricula, learning tools, delivery modalities, etc. that applicants believe could best facilitate successful new venture creation by service members, veterans, and military spouse participants. Applicants should be prepared to include in their proposals the efficacy and measures of effectiveness of their suggested approach(es).

12. What is the funding amount per entity and how many veterans is each entity expected to service?

As stated in the original solicitation for Statements of Interest (SOI), a maximum of \$2.5 million is available for funding. There is no set award amount per entity. The SBA Office of Veterans Business Development (OVBD) expects to make between one and four awards. Depending on the capabilities of prospective applicants and program requirements, OVBD may make awards for all or a portion of the requirements. No funding match requirement is anticipated for the B2B Program Announcement.

13. What are goals of new funding? Will it be focused on growing the program's reach or maintaining current reach?

The goal is for the SBA to exercise due diligence in examining the market for the best value to the government. The SBA seeks to maintain the quality and volume of Boots to Business (B2B) training and ensure key elements of the B2B program are delivered. Some of these key elements are identified in the SOI. The SBA seeks efficiency in delivering the program world-wide while also interested in innovative ideas in providing entrepreneurship development benefits to transitioning service members.

14. Is there any flexibility in the minimum request amount? Can we ask for less to serve a more limited geographic area and consequently fewer classes/participants?

As outlined on page 2 of the SOI announcement, “Intro” classes are currently delivered in-person. Stateside (includes U.S. and territories, known as continental U.S. or CONUS), these classes are taught by SBA personnel and SBA resource partners. The SBA is not currently planning cooperative agreement or grant funding opportunities for CONUS “Intro” instruction. Overseas (OCONUS) courses are taught by SBA’s existing cooperative agreement partner. Overseas instruction of the “Intro” course is the subject of a forthcoming SBA funding opportunity. To ensure consistency, the SBA anticipates one sole provider of overseas “Intro” instruction.

15. How is SBA envisioning the geographic distribution of new B2B partners? Will awardees have a defined regional focus, for example?

In addition to Boots to Business (B2B) OCONUS instruction and curricula, the program announcement includes online entrepreneurship training or alternatives, B2B program evaluation, or B2B website hosting. The B2B curricula will be implemented state-side by an existing network of CONUS instructors and implemented globally by a to-be-determined pool of OCONUS instructors (as outlined in the SOI). The existing network of CONUS instructors are regionally and locally dispersed as the SBA leverages its Resource Partners and SBA district office personnel to provide instruction and deliver the existing B2B curricula.

16. Is teaching overseas required?

Overseas instruction is one of five operational areas or core elements of the upcoming B2B grant. Please see the “Related Documents” tab in the grants.gov SOI announcement to view additional details on overseas scope of operations. The NOFA will allow applicants to bid on specific modules, so your project proposal should indicate which modules you wish to apply for. Stateside instruction will continue to be provided by SBA resource partners.

17. Will travel be expected of the selected firm?

Depending on the specific services an applicant proposes to provide, yes, travel would be expected. OVBD is pursuing a modular approach to awarding against the identified requirements. In other words, a future awardee may be selected to provide services across all the requirement categories, or may be selected for one or several categories. For example, an organization may have the capability to provide follow-on training to CONUS and OCONUS customers, but may not have the capability or desire to provide Intro Boots to Business class training instructors at overseas installations. All travel expenses are incorporated in the budget and reimbursed quarterly.

18. What is the number of anticipated instructors?

Please see “Related Documents”, page 2, for the operations scale of B2B operations. This data will help applicants determine how many trainers may be needed to meet the requirement of the cooperative agreement. In the U.S. and its territories, B2B instruction is currently, and will continue to be, provided by SBA employees and SBA resource partners (Veteran Business Outreach Centers, Small Business Development Centers, Women’s Business Centers, and SCORE). Overseas instruction is currently, provided under our cooperative agreement. In FY 2016, overseas B2B instruction was delivered via 108 two-day classes at approximately 34 installations in eight countries, training over 1,600 participants.

19. What kinds of professional backgrounds are expected or encouraged for delivery of the B2B training courses?

Assuming the question is referring to the professional backgrounds of Boots to Business (B2B) training instructors, the decision is for the applicant to develop and submit a proposal they deem effective in addressing the identified SBA requirements. In the past, successful applicants have highlighted their organization's experience and capability in providing superior entrepreneurship training to transitioning service personnel. This experience has included the number of years conducting such activities and the process for selection and recruitment of experienced entrepreneurship educators as trainers, as well as the ability to provide instructors to beneficiaries in other countries with U.S. military presence. Additionally, B2B Foundations instructors are expected to be familiar with teaching online courses using online platforms to students who participate virtually.

20. What rates are considered strong for graduation, new business creation and sustainment?

With regard to the Boots to Business program, there are no standardized rates for graduation, new business creation, and sustainment. However, some baseline data is available. The FY16 graduation rate for the follow-on B2B Foundations online course is 33%, which is calculated by the number of course graduates divided by the number of those registering for the course. The SBA has done some preliminary research, surveying more than 10,000 Boots to Business (B2B) participants to examine the connection between entrepreneurial development training impacts on participant knowledge and action. The outcomes of the survey are included in a white paper entitled Operation Boots to Business Veteran Entrepreneurship Assessment, which may be accessed online at https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/b2b_vet_entrepreneurship_assessment.pdf. Initial survey results (reflecting the post-training actions of responding B2B participants) show:

- 79% are more likely to start a business;*
- 89% are more motivated to start a business;*
- 84% are more confident to start a business.*