



Your Pursuit • Our Power

# Annual Report 2021



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TO: The Governor of the State of Florida, Members of the Cabinet, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

December 1, 2021

It is my distinct privilege to submit Veterans Florida's annual report for 2021. This report marks the sixth full year of operation for our organization that we have made great progress in all of our major veterans program areas. Our mission is to attract and retain veterans to our great state and to make Florida their permanent residence.

The signing of House Bill 435 furthered that mission by designating Veterans Florida as the state's principal Department of Defense SkillBridge assistance organization. Establishing the nation's first statewide SkillBridge initiative is a major milestone that creates unprecedented opportunities for transitioning servicemembers, builds a talent pipeline for employers, and firmly plants Florida's flag as the top destination for military families. Initiatives like this further prove Florida's leaders are united in our commitment to bolstering the state's workforce with servicemembers who combine their military skills with training opportunities not available anywhere else.

Our nationwide, veteran-focused marketing campaign brought more than 73,000 unique and repeat visitors to our website and provided them with information on the benefits and opportunities available to veterans in and interested in Florida. This year's campaign saw continued growth in social media followers and email newsletter subscribers, as well as attracting over 2,600 veterans seeking career assistance and job placement.

The Veterans Florida Workforce Training Grant program has seen steady growth and to date we have contracted with over 80 total businesses that have hired/trained more than 1,200 veterans. These veterans collectively have earned over \$50 million in salary that is going directly back into Florida's economy.

Since the inception of the Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program in early 2016, it has received 3,817 applications from veterans across the state, served 2,372 veterans and provided assistance to 504 veteran owned businesses. These businesses have collectively earned almost \$124 million in revenue, accessed over \$27 million in debt and equity financing, and hired 744 employees.

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

Sincerely,



Warren R. McPherson  
Chair, Veterans Florida Board of Directors

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

# Board of Directors

## Appointed by the Governor



**Warren R. "Rocky" McPherson, Chair**

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

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

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

Governor Rick Scott appointed Rocky to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2017.



**James Sampey**

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

including SunTrust Bank, and Jim Moran School of Entrepreneurship at Florida State University.

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



### **Mark Harden**

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

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

Governor Rick Scott appointed Mark to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2017.

## **Appointed by the Senate President**



### **Tom Rice, Treasurer**

Tom Rice is the owner of The Magnolia Grill of Ft. Walton Beach, which he and his wife, Peggy, opened in 1996. In 2004, the Magnolia Grill received Florida's Good Neighbor Award from the National Restaurant Association and was the Greater Ft. Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce's Small Business of the Year. In 2007, Congressman Jeff Miller recognized Tom and Peggy for humanitarian work in the Congressional Record of the 110th Congress. Tom serves on numerous Boards, including being Chairman of the Community Advisory Board of the Salvation Army of Okaloosa and Walton County, Florida. He serves as Secretary of Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida and Chairs the Veterans Tribute Tower Committee. He is a member of the board of directors of the Air Force Enlisted Village (Bob Hope

Village) and its assisted living facility, The Hawthorne House since 2015. Tom was named to the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame, Class of 2017.

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



**Angela Drzewiecki**

Angela Drzewiecki is a consultant at Peebles, Smith & Matthews, a government affairs firm in Tallahassee, Florida. Angela has worked on state policy issues for over 10 years and has served a diverse client base including municipalities, trade associations and businesses before the Florida Legislature.

Prior to joining the firm in 2017, she worked at several high-profile lobbying firms in Tallahassee. She began her career working as a core team member on a gubernatorial campaign where she gained a diverse knowledge of Florida government.

Angela attended Florida State University, where she earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science as well as a Master's degree in Applied American Politics and Policy.

As a Gold Star family member and military spouse, Angela brings a unique perspective and valuable insight to the Veterans Florida Board. Senate President Bill Galvano appointed Angela to the Veterans Florida Board in 2019.



**Lynda L. Weatherman**

Lynda L. Weatherman currently serves as President and CEO of the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast. She is responsible for attracting new business, and the retention of existing industry, throughout Brevard County, Florida. Lynda earned a master's degree in economic development from the University of Southern Mississippi which resulted in the award of a Rotarian Fellowship to the University of Hong Kong where, in 1990, she completed a second master's degree in international and urban

planning.

In 2007, Lynda was honored with the NASA Distinguished Public Service Medal, the highest honor NASA awards to both government and non-government employees. In 2010, she was selected to be a member of the Air Force Chief of Staff Civic Leader Program, serving as an

advisor, key communicator, and advocate for the Air Force and providing ideas and feedback to the Secretary of the Air Force and Air Force Chief of Staff. In 2011, Lynda was awarded "Professional of the Year" by the Florida Economic Development Council recognizing excellence among economic development practitioners throughout the state of Florida.

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

## Appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives



### **Martin Steele, Vice Chair**

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

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

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



### **Robert M. Kirila**

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

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



Robert holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of Richmond and Master's degrees from Central Michigan University and the United States War College. Among his awards are the Legion of Merit, Distinguished Service Medals, the Bronze Star, and the Green Beret authorized by President John F. Kennedy. Robert lives with his wife Chrissie and two children in Valparaiso.

Speaker Richard Corcoran appointed Robert to the Veterans Florida Board of Directors in 2018.



**Jerry L. Neff**

Brigadier General (Retired) Jerry L. Neff enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard 1960 before transferring to the Florida Army National Guard and graduating from the Florida National Guard Officer Candidate School in 1964.

When General Neff retired in June 1999, he was the Deputy Commanding General, 32<sup>nd</sup> Army Air and Missile Defense Command, Orlando, Florida.

General Neff's numerous decorations and awards include the Legion of Merit, The Meritorious Service Medal, and Army Commendation Medal (with oak leaf cluster).

General Neff was a banker for 47 years and retired in 2009 as President of M&I Bank, Florida Region, and then served for two years as Chairman of M & I Bank Advisory Board.

General Neff graduated from Excelsior College with a Bachelor of Science degree in liberal arts and the U.S. Army War College. General Neff is married to the former Judy Evans and resides in Bradenton, Florida.

Speaker Richard Corcoran appointed General Neff to the Board of Directors in 2018.

## Committees of the Board

The Board of Directors maintains two committees to advise the Board on oversight and direction to the corporation.

Budget and  
Finance  
Committee

Programs and  
Outreach  
Committee

# Meet The Team

**Joe Marino, Executive Director** – United States Military Academy Graduate, U.S. Army Veteran

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

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

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

**Heather Collins, Director of Administration** – Military in Family

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

**Dan Barrow, Communications and Marketing Director – Military Supporter**

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

**Amy Entress, Partner Development Manager – U.S. Navy Veteran**

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

**Sheila Helton, Grants Manager – Military in Family**

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

**Danielle Ochoa, Information Technology Manager – Military in Family**

The Information Technology (IT) Manager is responsible for planning, implementing, and maintaining Veterans Florida's online web presence, software implementation, hardware

procurement and installation, and providing technology support and updates. The IT Manager reports to the Director of Administration and supports all program teams at Veterans Florida.

**Lesli Sullivan, Office Manager – Military Supporter**

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

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

The Veterans Services Specialist provides individual assistance to veterans and servicemembers transitioning out of the Armed Forces and living in or desiring to move to Florida. The VETS Specialist assists with matching veterans to program services, resume instruction, interview preparation, career guidance and referrals to other resources. In addition, the VETS Specialist attends events, such as career/resource fairs and conferences to recruit and educate veterans. The VETS Specialist reports to the VETS Director.

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

The Veterans Services Specialist provides individual assistance to veterans and servicemembers transitioning out of the Armed Forces and living in or desiring to move to Florida. The VETS Specialist assists with matching veterans to program services, resume instruction, interview preparation, career guidance and referrals to other resources. In addition, the VETS Specialist attends events, such as career/resource fairs and conferences to recruit and educate veterans. The VETS Specialist reports to the VETS Director.

**Casey Speers, Social Media and Content Specialist – Military Supporter**

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

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

## Workforce and Career Services Programs

To better serve the needs of veteran job seekers and employers, Veterans Florida maintains the Workforce and Career Services Program. This program houses our largest grant program, the Veterans Florida Workforce Training Grant, which reimburses eligible companies for 50 percent of the training cost for every veteran trained, up to \$8,000 per employee.

The Workforce Training Grant incentivises Florida employers to hire and retain veterans who wish to augment their existing skill set developed during military service. The Veterans Florida workforce team actively works with employers to translate military experience into comparable civilian experience requirements. The team educates employers and their human resources teams on the value and capabilities veterans bring to the workforce.



The Career Services Program allows Veterans Florida to actively recruit qualified veterans to fill positions at companies across the state. Veterans can upload their resume for consideration for any position or apply directly for open positions through the career portal on veteransflorida.org. Veterans Services Coordinators reach out to provide employment services such as resume assistance, interview preparation, career matching, and counsel veterans on additional resources available to them.

During FY 2020-21, a total of 2,697 veterans were served seeking career assistance or job placement from veterans in Florida and across the country. Over 80 employers have used Veterans Florida Workforce and Career Services this year.

Workforce Grant Reimbursements FY 2020-21		
Fiscal Year	Veterans Trained	Workforce Grant Reimbursements
FY 2015-16	1	\$2,520
FY 2016-17	117	\$476,070
FY 2017-18	187	\$687,483
FY 2018-19	303	\$712,765
FY 2019-20	393	\$1,112,985
<b>FY 2020-21</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>\$862,129</b>
Total Grant Reimbursements	1238	\$3,853,952

Workforce Veteran Training Grant Program began January 2016

## SkillBridge Program

The DOD SkillBridge program allows transitioning servicemembers, with commander approval and within their last six months of military service, the opportunity to work for a civilian employer. The program affords servicemembers the opportunity to sharpen critical job skills and obtain specialized training, while retaining their full pay and allowances. The goal is to minimize the employment gap between military separation and beginning their civilian career. In fiscal year 2020, Veterans Florida became an authorized DOD SkillBridge provider for our Agriculture Program in partnership with the University of Florida. Built on the success of the initial SkillBridge opportunity, Veterans Florida began expanding the program with



additional employers. This past year we have created 32 SkillBridge opportunities with 9 additional employers.

In 2021, the Governor signed legislation passed by the Legislature to create the nation’s first statewide SkillBridge Initiative. Veterans Florida is the principal organization to execute the initiative.

In fiscal year 2020-21 Veterans Florida began assisting transitioning servicemembers with matching Florida opportunities. Veterans Florida is also working with employers to expand opportunities for training and internships throughout the state. This effort is directly responsible for attracting and assisting transitioning servicemembers and their families in making Florida their permanent home.

SkillBridge Program			
Fiscal Year	Applications Received	Participants Served	Participants Completed
FY 2020-21	48	16	1
Total FY 2020-21	48	16	1

## Agriculture Program

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



Program building on the success of the prior 18-month Pilot Program. Our objective was to put ten (10) veterans through the program. Veterans Florida successfully completed the stated objective with support from the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS). All of the veterans who participated in the Agriculture Program were either placed into agriculture related employment, are starting their own farms, or are furthering their education in an agriculture related degree. Additionally, we strengthened our outreach and

developed relationships with a majority of the UF/IFAS Research and Education Centers (RECs) and demonstration sites around the state.

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



One more recent graduate, Sara Ferrera, received special recognition from the Governor, Ron DeSantis, and Commissioner of Agriculture, Nikki Fried, for her outstanding accomplishments in the agriculture industry. Sara started her career in the Veterans Florida Agriculture Program.

Agriculture Program				
Fiscal Year	Applications Received	Participants Served	Participants Completed	Participants Placed
Total FY 2018-20	87	54	8	9
<b>FY 2020-21</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
Total FY 2018-21	111	66	18	20

All participants were either placed into agriculture related employment, are starting their own farms, or are furthering their agriculture education.



## Entrepreneurship Program

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

The Entrepreneurship Program conducted its sixth year of operation in Fiscal Year 2020-21. Since the inception of the program in early 2016, the program has received more than 3,800 applications from veterans across the state and served 2,372 veterans.

The program features several opportunities to meet the needs of veteran entrepreneurs at different stages of their entrepreneurial journey.



The first pathway, consists of topical workshops and networking opportunities designed to introduce veterans to their local veteran entrepreneurial ecosystems and assist with specific training topics to assist them in their business. This pathway is a low-risk, low-commitment option to get involved in their local communities and assist with specific gaps in their entrepreneurship education.

These topical workshops and networking events held on location at one of our entrepreneur partners. This pathway carries a low commitment which consists of 2-3 hour workshops and is designed for veterans varying states of their entrepreneurial career, those seeking specialized help topics such as franchising or government contracting, or those just seeking to connect with other veteran business owners.

The next pathway consists of cohorts designed to assist veteran entrepreneurs with starting their business or growing their early stage business after startup. These cohorts delve deeply into all aspects of entrepreneurship, with on location facilitation held at one of our entrepreneur partners. This pathway is reserved for a maximum of 15 veterans per partner with well-defined business ideas or early-stage companies at each entrepreneur partner. Acceptance into this portion of the program is managed by the partners.

The final pathway offers coworking and incubator space to assist veterans with early stage startup companies in establishing and growing their company. These low-cost entrepreneurship partners offer a dedicated workspace with access to professional meeting spaces, entrepreneurship education, training, and networking events.

**Entrepreneurship Program Partners for 2020-21**



**Entrepreneur Program Participants Cumulative Reported Data All Years**

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

Entrepreneur Program Participants			
Fiscal Year	Applications Received	Participants Served	Program Completions
FY 2015-16	612	424	167
FY 2016-17	458	300	147
FY 2017-18	787	393	82
FY 2018-19	910	426	96
FY 2019-20	449	304	108
<b>FY 2020-21</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>262</b>
Total FY 2015-21	3,817	2,372	862

## Marketing Program

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

The marketing team works closely with VISIT

Florida to carry out the annual marketing campaign. Paid efforts mainly center around social media and digital campaigns, with LinkedIn being a priority to reach the target audience. The shift in strategy away from high-volume web traffic to more targeted campaigns on LinkedIn has generated a significant increase in our presence and reach on the platform among users in key



demographics and industries. Other channels include public relations, traditional print advertising, radio, and paid search through Google's \$10,000 per month AdGrants program.

The in-house writing team produces regular content around monthly themes highlighting our participants' success and opportunities in key Florida industries. These blog posts are among the highest-performing content pieces, and have contributed to earned media coverage in major target markets. The marketing team executes topical webinars with veterans, servicemembers, and economic development partners to promote our programs, answer questions, and increase visibility of Florida's veterans support initiatives.



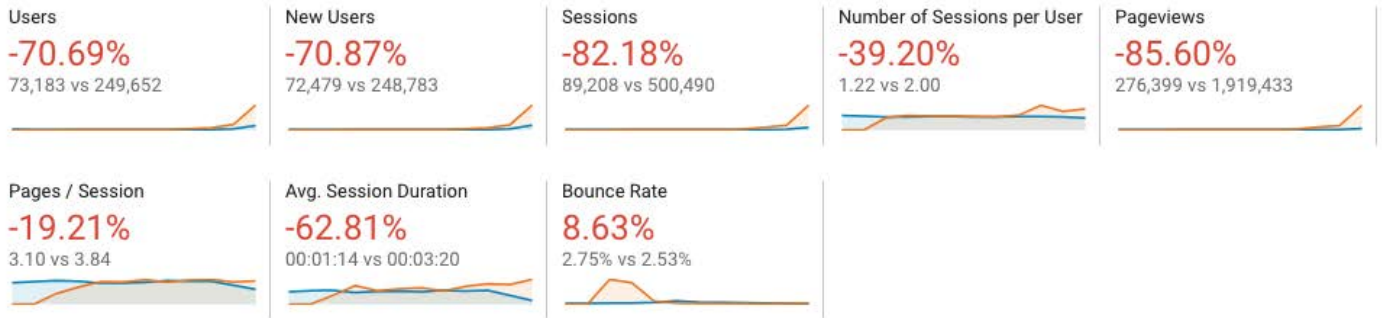
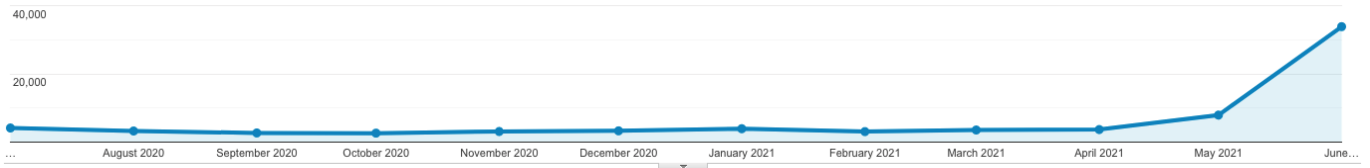
The marketing team has full web development, video production, and creative capabilities, allowing Veterans Florida to operate with the flexibility to quickly capitalize on opportunities and maximize our reach and impact. The team built our website, handles all public relations, and creates all of the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

The 2021 Veterans Florida Expo was scheduled for June 24, 2021, however due to unforeseen issues with the hosting platform, the event was rescheduled to July 29. The event was a success with over 1,100 registrations, 310 attendees, and 10 sponsors. Attendees viewed 23 panels for a total of 1,330 video views. Employers

participating in Expo received access to over 387 submitted resumes. My Steady Mind placed first in the Battle of the Pitches and received \$4,000, Accel EQ placed second and received \$2,000, and 1PL8 was third and received \$1,000. Prize funds were provided by Bank of America and Learning Alliance. Overall Veterans Florida received very positive feedback from sponsors, presenters, and viewers, which reflects the strong team effort as staff adapted to a virtual format in a short period of time. The content remains on YouTube providing attendees constant access to panels and speakers and we distribute it throughout the year on email and social media.

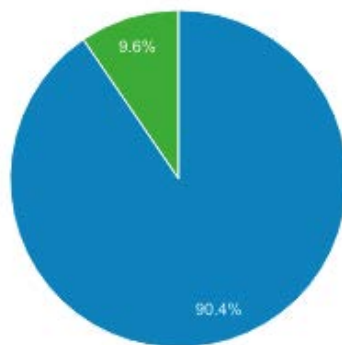
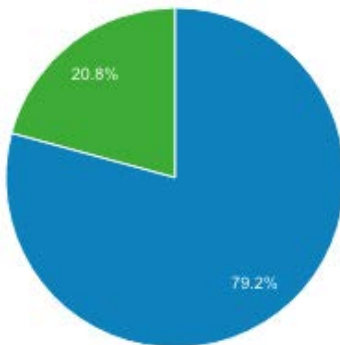
Marketing Metrics	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	% Change	Notes
Total Unique Website Visitors	249,652	<b>73,183</b>	-51.10%	Result of Strategy Shift in Paid Advertising
Total Facebook Page Likes	81,861	<b>80,858</b>	-1.23%	Standard Facebook Scrub of Inactive Accounts
Email Newsletter Subscribers	33,516	<b>34,996</b>	4.42%	
LinkedIn Followers	3,940	<b>4,931</b>	25.15%	Result of focus on LinkedIn
Twitter Followers	665	<b>702</b>	5.56%	

## Annual Web Traffic



Jul 2, 2019 - Jun 30, 2020

Jul 1, 2020 - Jun 30, 2021



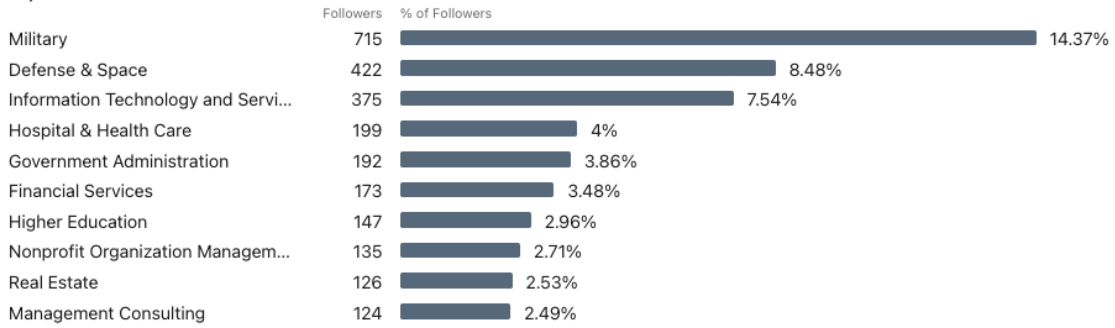
■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor

# LinkedIn Demographics

Follower Demographics ⓘ

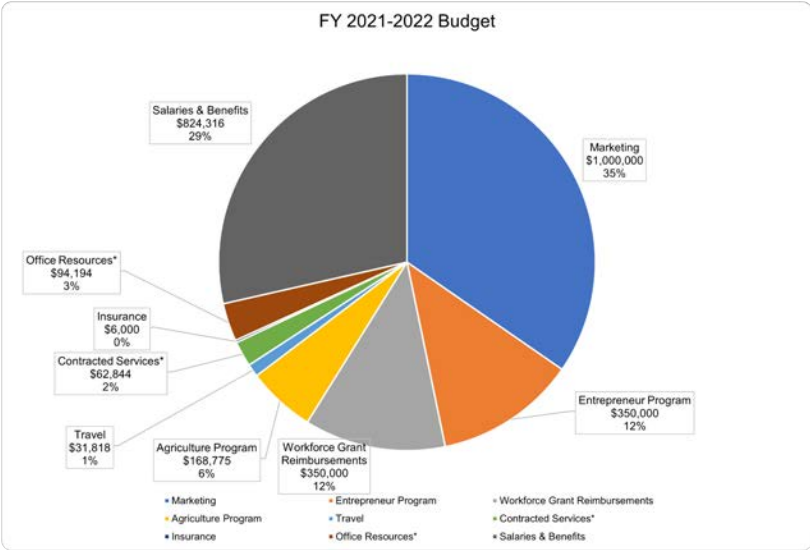
Data for: Industry ▾

## Top industries

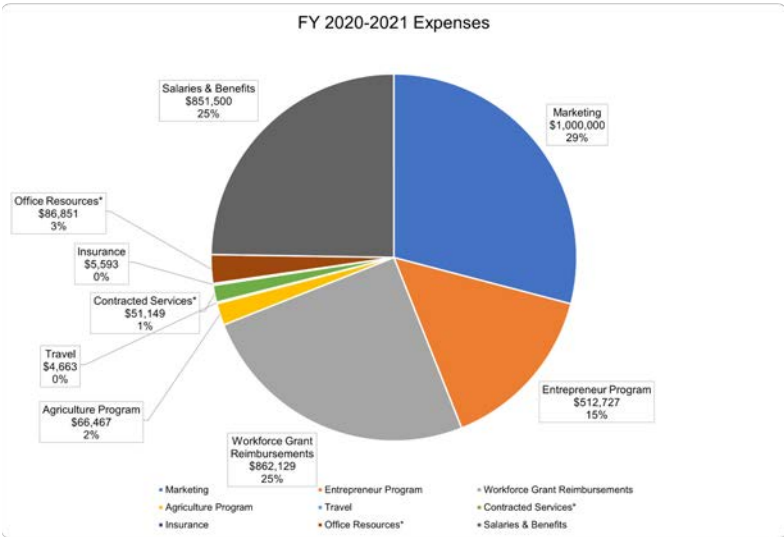


# Financial Summary

Veterans Florida derives revenue from many sources, with the primary funder being the State of Florida. The organization is small and lean and conducts a great number of activities towards accomplishing the Mission. In FY 2020-21, adjustments were made throughout the year due to the impacts of COVID-19 such as implementing a hiring freeze and purchasing equipment so the staff could work remotely for several months.



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



## Contracts FY 2020-2021

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

Contracts				
Date Entered	Contractor	Service Provided	Amount	Date Completed
6/22/2021	Carr, Riggs & Ingram	Auditing	\$11,250	12/1/2021
12/6/2020	DocuSign	eSignature Software	\$1,449	12/5/2021
5/26/2021	Four Points Sheraton	Room Rental	\$150	6/14/2021
8/12/2020	Get Started, LLC	Entrepreneurship Program Materials	Not to exceed \$15,000	6/30/2021
10/16/2020	Florida Veterans Foundation	Advertising	\$5,000	12/31/2021
2/12/2020	Orlando Hilton	Expo Venue	\$10,000	6/19/2022
12/14/2020	Diversity Group Associates	Agriculture Program Third-Party Auditing	\$17,695	10/31/2021
6/14/2019	930 TVR, LLC	Office Lease	\$184,372	8/31/2024

## Development

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



will yield even greater outcomes for veterans returning to civilian life and for our economic impact within the state of Florida.

Awards			
Organization	Amount	Type	Purpose
USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (3 Year Award)	\$745,245	Grant	Agriculture Program
Boeing	\$75,000	Grant	VETS Services
Regions Bank	\$5,000	Grant	VETS Services
Bank of America	\$15,000	Sponsorship	EXPO
Learning Alliance	\$5,000	Sponsorship	EXPO
CareerSource Florida	\$2,500	Sponsorship	EXPO
VITAS Healthcare	\$2,500	Sponsorship	EXPO
Florida International University	\$500	Sponsorship	EXPO
Collab Resume	\$500	Sponsorship	EXPO
National Aviation Academy	\$500	Sponsorship	EXPO
Western Governors University	\$500	Sponsorship	EXPO
University of North Florida	\$500	Sponsorship	EXPO
Florida Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve	\$500	Sponsorship	EXPO
Other Supporters	\$444	Donations	Operations
<b>Total FY 2020-21</b>	<b>\$853,689</b>		

# Outlook

Becoming the state lead for the Florida SkillBridge Initiative this year, Veterans Florida outreach saw unprecedented organizational growth despite the lingering effects of COVID-19. The entrepreneurship program served the most veterans in its six year history, and expanded to offer new services such as coworking spaces. All of the funds in the Workforce Training Grant were dispersed to employers for the first time, while the VETS team took on the additional duties of SkillBridge matching of servicemembers to employers. The agriculture program served the most participants to date, with many going on to start agribusinesses or careers in farming. In addition to expanding our services, becoming the state's principal SkillBridge organization has strengthened our statewide partner relations and elevated Veterans Florida's standing to a more prominent role in the economic development community.

The Virtual Expo grew significantly with over five times as many panels, 50 more employers, and over 300 more resumes received. While we look forward to returning to an in-person event, the team gained valuable experience hosting the virtual format that we continue to utilize throughout the year with webinars, conferences, and online career fairs.

The momentum from this year's successes will carry us to next year, with a continued focus on expanding SkillBridge in terms of adding new employers, partnering with more economic development organizations, and raising awareness among servicemembers. Agriculture will remain a priority as we see strong demand for the program through both the USDA grant and SkillBridge.

The 2022 Expo is planned for June 17-18 at the Orlando Hilton and we will build on the success from previous years with the goal of making it the largest and most productive veterans support event yet.





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