

S Syracuse University

Institute for Veterans
& Military Families

JPMorgan Chase & Co., Founding Partner

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Whitman School
of Management

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Advancing Veteran Entrepreneurship Through Education

2021 NASPA Virtual Symposium on
Military-Connected Students



National Survey of Military-Affiliated Entrepreneurs

The Need

- ▶ Several limitations and missed opportunities with existing data sources
- ▶ Increasing interest in research on veteran entrepreneurs:
 - Studies narrowly focus on a specific aspect of business ownership
 - Redundant
 - May lack cultural competency of the population
- ▶ Declining research participation (e.g., “survey fatigue”) in the absence of a coordinated approach
- ▶ Consequently, our collective understanding of veteran entrepreneurial activity is limited—this limitation will only worsen with time
- ▶ There is a clear need and demand to assess military-affiliated business ownership on a more frequent, systematic basis.

DATA GAPS

Critical gaps and missed data opportunities in our understanding of veteran and military spouse entrepreneurs:

- ✘ Limited to a finite set of questions nested within broader population surveys
- ✘ Draw from small samples
- ✘ Conducted at lengthy time intervals



National Initiative

- ▶ With support from the Kauffman Foundation, we launched a multi-year study of **veteran and military spouse** entrepreneurs.
- ▶ The first national initiatives to develop data-driven research focused on military-affiliated entrepreneurship.
- ▶ Initiative is designed to address knowledge gaps in understanding of veteran and military spouse entrepreneurs and the supports and resources needed to assist throughout their entrepreneurial journey.

Aim 1

Fill persistent knowledge gaps in public data on military-connected entrepreneurial behavior over time

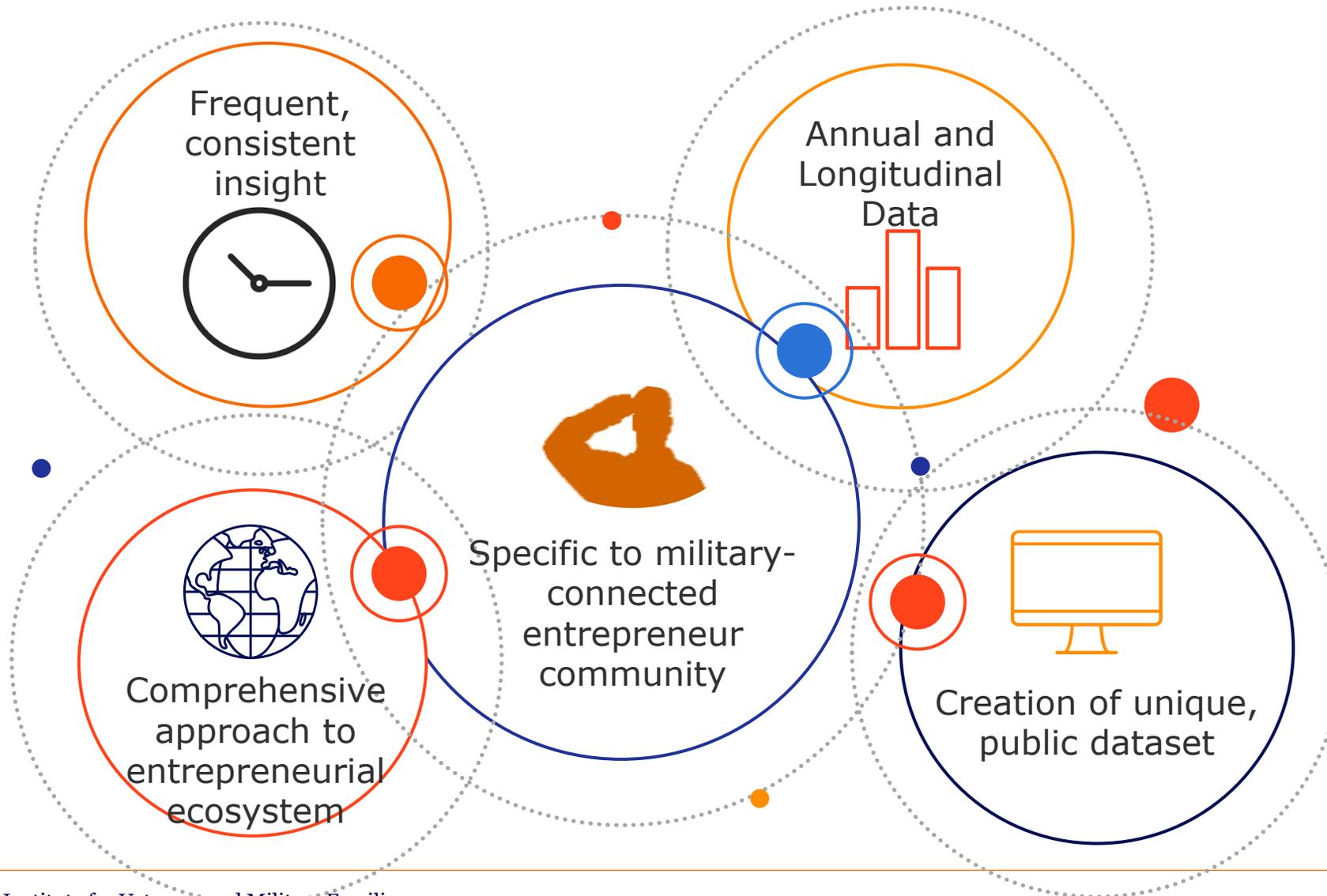
Aim 2

Track veteran and military spouse entrepreneurial experiences and behaviors at different points in the business life cycle

Aim 3

Gather more timely perspectives on the impact of contemporary issues and policies on veteran and military spouse business ownership and entrepreneurship

Key Differentiators



Three-Year Initiative

MILITARY-CONNECTED PARTICIPANTS
(TRANSITIONING MILITARY, VETERANS,
AND MILITARY SPOUSES)



GROUP 1
GROUP BEING
SURVEYED
ANNUALLY

2020
Annual
Survey

ALL ENTREPRENEUR TYPE
(ASPIRING, CURRENT, FORMER)



2021
Annual
Survey

**QUESTIONS RELATED TO INDIVIDUAL,
MILITARY SERVICE, BUSINESS VENTURE,
AND COMMUNITY**

2022
Annual
Survey



GROUP 2
LONGITUDINAL PANEL OF MILITARY-CONNECTED ENTREPRENEURS



2020 WAVE 1

2021 WAVE 2

2022 WAVE 3

SAME GROUP SURVEYED ANNUALLY OVER THREE YEARS



2020 Survey

Results, Key Highlights, and Insights

Sample

Have you ever (or ever wanted to): started a business, grew a business, worked for yourself, done freelance or contract work, or become self-employed?	Frequency	Percent
Yes, I do something like that now.	2,534	86.57%
Yes, I used to do something like that, but not anymore.	141	4.82%
Yes, I have wanted to or thought about it, but I have not actually done it.	252	8.61%
Total	2,927	

Which of the following best describes your current military status and/or affiliation?	Frequency	Percent
Veteran/Retiree	2,554	88.19%
Spouse/Partner/Family	177	6.11%
Active Duty/NGR	165	5.70%
Total	2,896	

Motivations

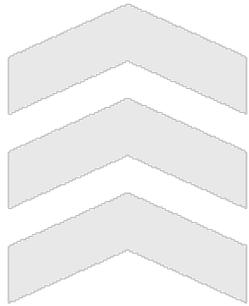


Military Skills & Attributes that Apply to Entrepreneurship

- ▶ Work ethic/self-discipline (55%)
- ▶ Teamwork (46%)
- ▶ Leadership and management skills (40%)
- ▶ Mental toughness (37%)
- ▶ Perseverance (33%)

93%

INDICATED THESE SKILLS HELPED THEM in their business/venture



Interest in Entrepreneurship

61%

interested in entrepreneurship prior to military

21%

were not interested in entrepreneurship prior to serving in the military



What does entrepreneurship success look like to you?

“Success is being in a position of mentorship to other new business owners or entrepreneurs.”

- Marine Corps Veteran Entrepreneur, CEO, and Business Owner Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services Industry

ENTREPRENEURSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

Top Motivations to Entrepreneurship

- ▶ Make own decisions (44%)
- ▶ Chance to implement own ideas/creating something (43%)
- ▶ Opportunity to be financially independent/increase personal income (43%)
- ▶ Maintain personal freedom (39%)
- ▶ Helping society/supporting community (34%)

Attitudes and Perspectives

94% do not give up easily even in the face of difficulties

83% use creativity to overcome difficulty

79% work consistently on a goal when met with obstacles

70% feel responsible for their local community

Barriers to Entrepreneurship

Top Problems or Barriers in Pursuing or Achieving Business Goals

42%

Lack of initial capital



29%

Problems finding good employees/contracted personnel

24%

Irregular income



23%

Current economic situation

22%

Lack of mentors for my business

21%

Taxes & legal fees



20%

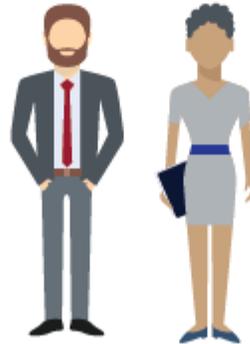
Lack of experience in entrepreneurship or business ownership



Transition Difficulty and Key Challenges

44% HAD DIFFICULTY WITH THE TRANSITION FROM MILITARY TO CIVILIAN LIFE

- ▶ 53% indicated that they needed time to figure out what to do in their civilian life
- ▶ 41% indicated that adjusting to civilian life was difficult



Top Transitional Challenges for Veteran Entrepreneurs



- ▶ Getting socialized to civilian culture (35%)
- ▶ Loss of connection with military community (31%)
- ▶ Loss of sense of purpose/camaraderie (30%)

MAJOR FACTORS that Impact Starting a Business

PEOPLE & SOCIAL CAPITAL

LACKED THE FOLLOWING:

Formal help to start business **40%**

Experience or exposure to someone who has run a business **32%**



CAPITAL

33% Couldn't afford long-term capital

27% Couldn't afford start-up costs

EXPERIENCE/KNOWLEDGE

DIDN'T KNOW THE FOLLOWING:

Practical details to start a firm. **27%**

Legalities of starting business. **23%**



Financial Related Barriers



Participants reported difficulty with:

APPLYING FOR GRANTS FROM NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS **66%**

IDENTIFYING SOURCES OF FUNDING TO START THE BUSINESS **53%**

APPLYING FOR LOANS **49%**

DENIAL OF CREDIT

34% were turned down by lender or creditor when applying for financing

OF THOSE THAT WERE TURNED DOWN:

59% did not reapply anywhere

28% did reapply and were turned down again

14% did reapply and got funding later

People & Social Capital Barriers



do not know anyone that they can rely on for help for their business



reported difficulty finding local business incubator/ nonprofit that helps business owners

Regulation Barriers

55% REPORTED THAT THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS IS DIFFICULT

- ▶ 28% reported difficulty obtaining the necessary licenses to operate business
- ▶ 19% reported difficulty registering your company with e-verify



Disability Related Barriers

OF THOSE WITH A SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY

56% DO NOT FEEL SUPPORTED BY THE MEDICAL AND DISABILITY SERVICE PROVIDERS

- ▶ 28% INDICATED THAT IT CREATES OBSTACLE IN BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

Capital

Sources of Capital



72%

needed capital to start/grow their business

28%

did not need capital to start/grow their business

TOP THREE SOURCES OF CAPITAL USED IN 2019 ARE:

- 1 Personal/family savings of the owner (63%)
- 2 Business credit card (38%)
- 3 Personal credit cards (35%)



Credit Card

43% of business debt is on credit cards
66% pay an interest rate that is higher than 10%
19% pay an interest rate between 20-29.99%

CAPITAL FOR DIFFERENT STAGES

STARTUP

- ▶ **59% NEEDED LESS THAN \$25,000** to start or acquire their business
- ▶ **60% WERE ABLE TO SECURE THE INITIAL FUNDING** for starting or acquiring the business in 2019 while 25% were not able to secure any funding at all
- ▶ **36% DO NOT FEEL PREPARED** for the traditional lending process

GROWTH

- ▶ **54% NEEDED MORE THAN \$25,000** to grow their business
- ▶ **41% WERE ABLE TO SECURE THE FUNDING** needed to grow the business in 2019 while 31% were not able to secure any funding at all
- ▶ **27% DO NOT FEEL PREPARED** for the traditional lending process



Support and Resources for Entrepreneurship



Entrepreneurship Resource Needs in Local Communities

Financial Resources

44% did not know about resources for grants in their local area

OF THOSE THAT KNEW:

59% indicate the resource need improvement, 32% indicate this resource is sufficient, and 19% indicate this resource is outstanding

52% did not know about Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) in their local area

43% indicate the resource need improvement, 44% indicate this resource is sufficient, and 14% indicate this resource is outstanding

Educational Resources

36% did not know about local incubators and accelerators in their local area

OF THOSE THAT KNEW:

34% indicate the resource need improvement, 41% indicate this resource is sufficient, and 25% indicate this resource is outstanding

76% know about college/university academic program in their local area

16% indicate the resource need improvement, 47% indicate this resource is sufficient, and 37% indicate this resource is outstanding

79% know about SBA resources (SBDC, WBDC, VBOC, etc.) in their local area

24% indicate the resource need improvement, 45% indicate this resource is sufficient, and 31% indicate this resource is outstanding

Networks and Membership Organizations

79% know about networking and engaging with other military-affiliated business owners in their local area

OF THOSE THAT KNEW:

37% indicate the resource need improvement, 40% indicate this resource is sufficient, and 23% indicate this resource is outstanding

80% know about Veteran Serving Organizations in their local area

32% indicate the resource need improvement, 42% indicate this resource is sufficient, and 26% indicate this resource is outstanding



70% of veteran entrepreneurs had support from friends and family to start their business

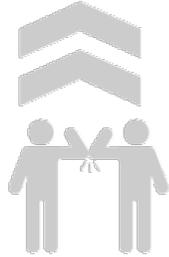
46% of veteran entrepreneurs indicated that navigating the resources in their local community was not easy

20% of veteran entrepreneurs do not feel supported by their local community

COVID-19 Pandemic

Preparedness for Entrepreneurship

65% OF VETERAN ENTREPRENEURS
INDICATE THAT THEIR MILITARY EXPERIENCE has prepared them for their business challenges associated with Covid-19 pandemic



76% OF VETERAN ENTREPRENEURS
INDICATE THAT THEY LOST BUSINESS DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

CLOSURE DURING COVID-19:

- ▶ 68% indicate that they do not anticipate closing their business
- ▶ 31% anticipate closing their business
- ▶ 1% already closed their business

OF THOSE THAT ANTICIPATE CLOSING:

- 13%** can operate for less than 3 months
- 47%** can operate between 6-12 months
- 40%** can operate more than a year



TOP RESOURCE NEEDS DURING COVID-19:

- ▶ General funding (financing, loans, grants) (37%)
- ▶ Government contracting assistance (28%)
- ▶ Day-to-day operations (25%)
- ▶ Emergency funding (20%)
- ▶ Assistance with adjusting marketing efforts (16%)



CARES ACT'S PAYROLL PROTECTION PROGRAM (PPP):

- ▶ 53% were approved and received funding
- ▶ 4% approved, waiting for funding
- ▶ 6% applied, pending approval
- ▶ 12% eligible, have not applied yet
- ▶ 5% turned down

CARES ACT'S ECONOMIC INJURY DISASTER LOAN (EIDL):

- ▶ 24% were approved and received funding
- ▶ 8% approved, waiting for funding
- ▶ 12% eligible, have not applied yet
- ▶ 5% turned down
- ▶ 31% not sure about eligibility

Support

56%
Believe that their business **HAS BEEN SUPPORTED** by the federal government during the pandemic



- 60%** Believe that their business has **NOT** been supported by local government
- 60%** Believe that their business has **NOT** been supported by state government
- 45%** Believe that their business has **NOT** been supported by local community
- 22%** Were **NOT** aware of the resources available to them and/or business during the pandemic

Syracuse University

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Recommendations

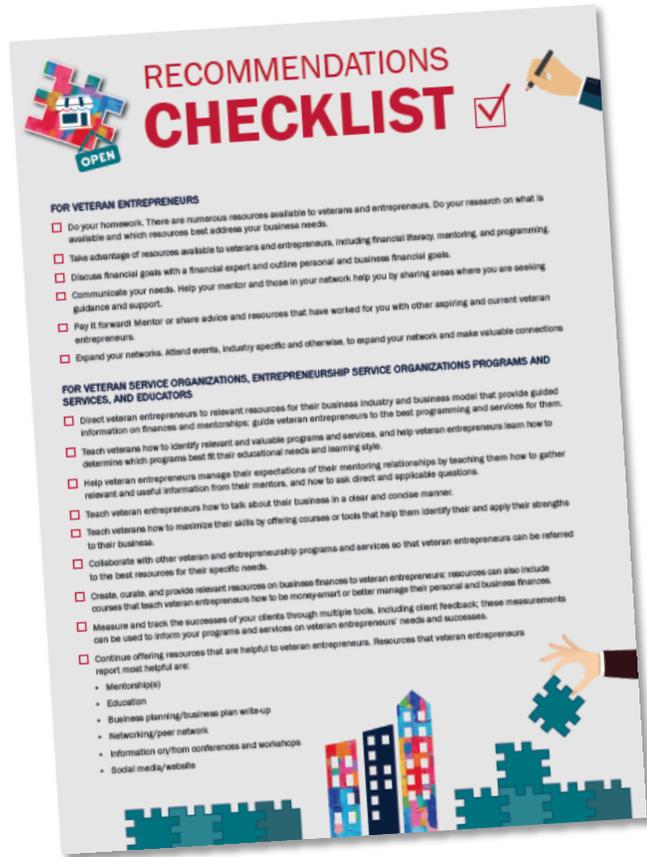
Veterans, Institutions of Higher Education, and Practitioners

Institutions of Higher Education



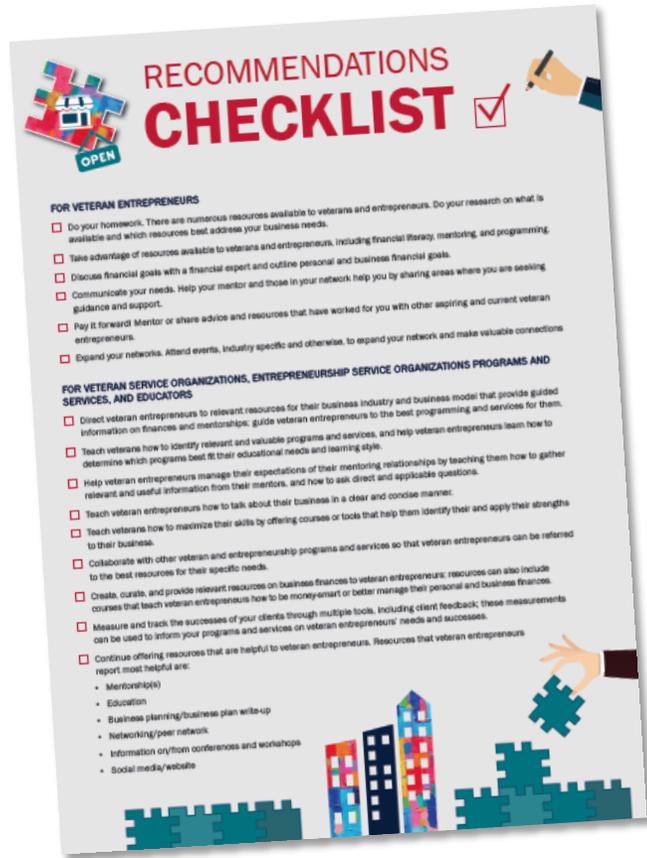
- ✓ Educate student veterans that it is OK to seek assistance
- ✓ Provide assistance and educational opportunities related to market research and analysis, establishing marketing strategy, goals, and objectives, and implementation of the marketing plan.
- ✓ Provide assistance to veteran entrepreneurs to pivot during the current business climate and adjust their marketing goals and efforts, e.g., build an online store, develop an online brand, etc.
- ✓ Educate yourself and your organization about (other) veteran entrepreneurship resources. Connect with them, collaborate, and educate the veteran entrepreneurs you serve about these resources, too.
- ✓ Provide resources to assist in the development of a BAIL (Banker, Accountant, Insurance, and Lawyer) team relevant to their business and industry.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself and your team/schools with the various certification options and resources both nationally and within your state to provide assistance and guidance to veteran entrepreneurs and educate aspiring veteran entrepreneurs about certification needs, so they can incorporate it within their business planning process .

Institutions of Higher Education



- ✓ Encourage faculty and research centers to research military-connected entrepreneurs
- ✓ Raise awareness of the NSMAE data base that can be used by faculty to conduct research
- ✓ Host and participate in Veteran Entrepreneurship symposiums, colloquiums, seminars/webinars, and other research and education related efforts that are related to military-affiliated entrepreneurs.
- ✓ Connect veterans to financial literacy training and/or create incentives within your programs and services to encourage financial literacy training.
- ✓ Encourage awareness of CDFIs, where to find them, how to work with them, and how to leverage them to grow their business and their network.
- ✓ Increase awareness of crowdfunding opportunities and assist with planning and execution.
- ✓ Promote available small business grants, as well as business plan competitions and other sources of nontraditional capital.

Institutions of Higher Education



- ✓ Entrepreneurship and small business services and programs should self-evaluate. This study's findings indicate programs need improvements.
- ✓ This study shows there is a need for greater collaboration between resource and service providers. Veteran entrepreneurs seek assistance with various organizations that have no access to each other's databases and often fail to understand what resources and services veterans are eligible for or have already accessed. Assist small business service providers in more collaborative effort to track the progress.
- ✓ Overall, veterans are not familiar with business incubators as a resource, and those utilizing such a resource believed the services needed improvements. If you have an incubator, encourage more veteran friendly practices. If you don't have one, consider starting one or collaborating with one in your region.

Veterans Resources & Tools



- ✓ Veterans and Institutions of Higher Education should familiarize themselves with following resources, these resources provide assistance, tools, guidance, and everything else that support veteran entrepreneurs:
 - ✓ SBDC: <https://americassbdc.org/find-your-sbdc/>
 - ✓ VBOC: <https://www.vbocix.org/about1>
 - ✓ SCORE: <https://www.score.org/find-location>
 - ✓ WBDC: <https://www.wbdc.org/about-us/wbdc-offices/>
 - ✓ IVMF Arsenal:
<https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/programs/entrepreneurship/>
 - ✓ Center of Excellence for Veteran Entrepreneurship:
<https://veteranentrepreneurship.org/>
 - ✓ PTAC: <https://www.aptac-us.org/find-a-ptac/>
 - ✓ INBIA: <https://inbia.org/>
 - ✓ CDFI: <https://www.cdfifund.gov/Pages/FAQ.aspx>
 - ✓ Bunker Labs: <https://bunkerlabs.org/>
 - ✓ VR&E Self-Employment: <https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/vocational-rehabilitation/programs/self-employment/>
 - ✓ NSMAE: <https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/nsmae-series/>
 - ✓ VetFran: <https://www.vetfran.org/>



Discussion

2021 NSMAE, Experiences, and Feedback

Questions & Discussion

- How can you assist us with the NSMAE 2021 data collection?



THANK YOU



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