



June 21, 2024

The Honorable Tony Evers
State Capitol
Room 115 East
Madison, WI 53707

Re: Report Under Wis. Statute Section 45.437(3) related to the Veterans Employment and Entrepreneurship Grant Program

Dear Governor Evers:

The attached document serves as the report to the Governor and the Wisconsin State Legislature, as required by the above-captioned statute relating to the Veterans Employment and Entrepreneurship Grant Program, for fiscal year (FY) 2023.

As prescribed, the report includes: (a) the number of grants awarded in FY 2023; (b) the amount of each grant awarded; (c) the purpose of each grant awarded; and (d) the outcomes attributable to each grant awarded.

From the appropriation under s. 20.485(2)(qm), Stats., the Department may award up to \$500,000 annually in grants to Veterans, employers, and nonprofit organizations. The first program is the Entrepreneurship Grant, which provides funds to entrepreneurial entities and employment training programs that benefit Veterans. Any 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(6) nonprofit must be registered and in good standing with the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions, and provides entrepreneurship training, technical or business assistance, or other assistance to veteran entrepreneurs to improve employment outcomes, is qualified to apply. The second program, the Employment Grant, provides funds to employers to incentivize the hiring of disabled Veterans. Employers that hire a disabled Veteran to work at a business within the state may receive \$5,000 for a full-time employee or up to \$2,500 for a part-time employee. The veteran must have a service-connected disability rating of at least 50%.

Grants to Nonprofit Organizations that assist Veteran Entrepreneurs are awarded once annually through a competitive application process, while the Grants to Employers are available on a rolling basis as employers apply. During FY 2023, two Entrepreneurship Grants were awarded totaling \$174,970.00, and 20 Employment Grants were awarded in the amount of \$67,569.16.

The summary of the support provided to the veterans by these organizations is provided in this document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Bond". The signature is stylized and cursive, with the first name "James" and last name "Bond" clearly visible.

James Bond
Secretary-designee

Attachment

cc: Ms. Lindsay Hale, Chief Clerk, Wisconsin State Senate
Mr. Edward Blazel, Chief Clerk, Wisconsin State Assembly
Deputy Secretary Christopher McElgunn, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs
Assistant Deputy Secretary Joseph Hoey, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

Grants to Nonprofit Organizations that assist Veteran Entrepreneurs

1. Fox Valley Technical College Grant Award Amount: \$99,970.00

Purpose: The purpose of the grant is to conduct two Innovation Accelerator programs for Veteran training cohorts, during winter/spring of 2023, which will provide entrepreneurial training and technical support, networking opportunities, one-on-one mentoring, and seed funds for startup/growth expenses for 30 Veteran-owned businesses.

Outcomes: The Fox Valley Technical College's Innovation Accelerator for Veterans Program served 16 Veteran entrepreneurs over the course of this award period, with 12 Veterans successfully expanding, starting, or developing their businesses in the next six to twelve months. "Phase One" of the Innovation Accelerator for Veterans program included a 24-hour, three-day Business Model Design Workshop where Veterans developed and improved their ability to create and assess a new business, product, service, solution, or technology. "Phase Two" included the 2-credit, 11-classes, 33-hour, E-seed Entrepreneurial Training Series enabling Veterans to refine their small business and entrepreneur management skills, develop their lean business plan, and build their network within the entrepreneur and small business ecosystem. The lean business plan enables participants to execute their business models, guide their launch and growth, and help them attract the financing they need. Seed capital of \$2,000 per Veteran was available upon successful completion of the Innovation Accelerator for Veterans program, submission of a lean business plan, and acceptable startup/growth uses of funds. "Phase Three" of the Innovation Accelerator for Veterans program included the Financial Management for Entrepreneurs and/or Website Design and Promotion workshops. Veteran participants exited this series understanding how to successfully manage their business's finances, understand their financial statements, and how to establish and maintain a professional long-term relationship with a local financial institution. They also learned how to create a simple website, create an online store, and develop a strategic email strategy. 12 of the 16 Veterans who enrolled in the program launched or are growing an enterprise. Specifically, 10 new Veteran small business owners are in operation/planning to launch and have filed their LLC in Wisconsin and two (2) are establishing small businesses with a strong path for sustainability and growth. During this grant period, Fox Valley Technical College returned unused funds in the amount of \$27,808.80 to the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs.

2. Lakeland University Grant Award Amount: \$75,000.00

Purpose: The purpose of the grant is to enable the university to build new programs (accelerator, roundtables, and a virtual network) to address the gaps in community resources. These gaps have been identified through a variety of interviews with

stakeholders in the community, and the program is tailored to serve the underserved, rural, and underrepresented entrepreneurs throughout Sheboygan and Manitowoc Counties.

Outcomes: During the grant period, eight (8) Veterans and their start-up businesses participated in the programs. Three (3) Veteran entrepreneurs planning to start businesses also participated. One of these businesses is planned to launch in Plymouth, and two more businesses are planned to launch in Sheboygan. An example business that directly benefited from the grant is Kids in Combat Boots. This business is now monetizing their podcast as they work to bring the software to market, and is generating revenue for the first time. In addition, the business raised an additional \$15,000 through pitch competitions after participating in the accelerator program. Lakeland University returned unused funds in the amount of \$39,835.00 to the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs.

Veterans Employment Grant

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs awarded the Veterans Employment Grant to 20 companies that employed veterans meeting the minimum 50% service-connected disability threshold on a full-time or part-time basis during this fiscal year. 18 of the companies employed a qualifying Veteran on a full-time basis, and two (2) companies employed a qualifying Veteran on a part-time basis.

The following companies received funding through the program:

Employer	Full/Part Time	Award
Stone Companies	Full-Time	\$5,000.00
Soar Case Management Service Inc.	Full-Time	\$5,000.00
Spuncast	Full-Time	\$2,500.00
Games For Us LLC	Part-Time	\$2,500.00
JDF.dba. Great Clips	Full-Time	\$1,793.26
Just Mile Motor Company LLC	Full-Time	\$5,000.00
Medford Motors	Full-Time	\$2,500.00
S&R Remodeling LLC	Full-Time	5,000.00
JH Larson Electrical Company	Full-Time	\$1,004.17
The Old Silo	Full-Time	\$1,890.09
Audiolust Records	Part-Time	\$2,304.61
Soar Case Management Service Inc.	Full-Time	\$2,500.00
Wisconsin American Legion, Inc.	Full-Time	\$5,000.00
Facility Functions	Full-Time	\$5,000.00
Strong Plumbing LLC.	Full-Time	\$2,339.57
Mad City Techs, LLC.	Full-Time	\$2,403.85
Security Officer Services, Inc.	Full-Time	\$5,000.00
Brewski Sports C	Full-Time	\$5,000.00
The Milwaukee Steakhouse	Full-Time	\$5,000.00
Student Transit Eau Claire, Inc.	Full-Time	\$833.61
Total Grant Awards:		\$67,569.16