

Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs: Gov. Evers, WDVA announce over \$400,000 in grants for organizations helping veteran entrepreneurs

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MADISON — Governor Tony Evers and Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) Secretary-designee Mary Kolar announced today more than \$400,000 in grants to five nonprofit organizations that provide entrepreneurship training, or technical, business or other assistance to veteran entrepreneurs to improve employment outcomes.

“When veterans who start their own businesses succeed, everyone benefits,” Governor Evers said. “To help veteran entrepreneurs achieve their goals in Wisconsin, we must provide them with the vital tools and resources they need to prosper.”

Since 2016, the WDVA’s Entrepreneurship Grant Program has provided more than \$1 million in funds to organizations assisting veteran entrepreneurs.

“Veteran entrepreneurs add value to our communities, and ensuring we support them and their success is vital to a healthy economy,” Secretary-designee Kolar said. “Military veterans bring knowledge, skills and abilities to our workforce that are unmatched. By starting their own business, veterans utilize skill sets they learned through their military service and contribute to our state.”

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that there are about 350,000

veterans living in Wisconsin, and about half of them are of working age. About 11 percent of all businesses in the state, or 65,000, are owned by veterans, and those businesses employ more than 100,000 Wisconsinites. A recent study estimated that Wisconsin's veteran-owned businesses account for about \$20 billion in annual sales.

This year's entrepreneurship grant recipients are:

- **Center for Veterans Issues, Ltd.**, Milwaukee, is awarded \$100,000 for a storefront retail café. The goal of the café is to create a new approach to vocational training and employment for veterans. The organization will train veterans in all areas of employment with an emphasis in food service. The Center for Veterans Issues will credential veterans for employment and help out in placing them in established jobs within the community.
- **Fox Valley Technical College Foundation**, Appleton, is awarded \$97,800 to help it conduct two innovation accelerators for veteran cohorts this fall and next spring. It will continue providing entrepreneurial training and technical support, networking opportunities, one-on-one mentoring and seed funds for startup expenses to veterans.
- **The Financial Promise**, Milwaukee, is awarded \$20,000 to continue the expansion of its mission of advocating for Wisconsin veterans through job training, financial literacy, business ownership and program outreach.
- **Wisconsin Veterans Chamber of Commerce**, Milwaukee, is awarded \$100,000 to continue its support of veteran entrepreneurs through educational sessions and events, networking opportunities and promotional programming.
- **Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation**, Milwaukee, is awarded \$100,000 to provide a comfortable and effective learning environment for veteran entrepreneurs through veteran cohorts. The classes will allow the group to provide unique opportunities for veterans to network and empower one another.