

Calendar No. 162

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 38

To amend the Small Business Act to codify the Boots to Business Program,
and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 24 (legislative day, JANUARY 3), 2023

Ms. DUCKWORTH (for herself and Ms. ERNST) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Small Business
and Entrepreneurship

JULY 25, 2023

Reported by Mr. CARDIN, with an amendment

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in italic]

A BILL

To amend the Small Business Act to codify the Boots to
Business Program, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Veteran Entrepreneur-
5 ship Training Act of 2023”.

1 **SEC. 2. BOOTS TO BUSINESS PROGRAM.**

2 Section 32 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C.
3 657b) is amended by adding at the end the following:

4 “(h) **BOOTS TO BUSINESS PROGRAM.**—

5 “(1) **COVERED INDIVIDUAL DEFINED.**—In this
6 subsection, the term ‘covered individual’ means—

7 “(A) a member of the Armed Forces, in-
8 cluding the National Guard or Reserves;

9 “(B) an individual who is participating in
10 the Transition Assistance Program established
11 under section 1144 of title 10, United States
12 Code;

13 “(C) an individual who—

14 “(i) served on active duty in any
15 branch of the Armed Forces, including the
16 National Guard or Reserves; and

17 “(ii) was discharged or released from
18 such service under conditions other than
19 dishonorable; and

20 “(D) a spouse or dependent of an indi-
21 vidual described in subparagraph (A), (B), or
22 (C).

23 “(2) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—During the period be-
24 ginning on the date of enactment of this subsection
25 and ending on September 30, 2028, the Adminis-
26 trator shall carry out a program to be known as the

1 'Boots to Business Program' to provide entrepre-
2 neurship training to covered individuals.

3 “(3) GOALS.—The goals of the Boots to Busi-
4 ness Program are to—

5 “(A) provide assistance and in-depth train-
6 ing to covered individuals interested in business
7 ownership; and

8 “(B) provide covered individuals with the
9 tools, skills, and knowledge necessary to identify
10 a business opportunity, draft a business plan,
11 identify sources of capital, connect with local
12 resources for small business concerns, and start
13 up a small business concern.

14 “(4) PROGRAM COMPONENTS.—

15 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Boots to Busi-
16 ness Program may include—

17 “(i) a presentation providing exposure
18 to the considerations involved in self-em-
19 ployment and ownership of a small busi-
20 ness concern;

21 “(ii) an online, self-study course fo-
22 cused on the basic skills of entrepreneur-
23 ship, the language of business, and the
24 considerations involved in self-employment
25 and ownership of a small business concern;

1 “(iii) an in-person classroom instruc-
 2 tion component providing an introduction
 3 to the foundations of self employment and
 4 ownership of a small business concern; and

5 “(iv) in-depth training delivered
 6 through online instruction, including an
 7 online course that leads to the creation of
 8 a business plan.

9 “(B) COLLABORATION.—The Adminis-
 10 trator may—

11 “(i) collaborate with public and pri-
 12 vate entities to develop course curricula for
 13 the Boots to Business Program; and

14 “(ii) modify program components in
 15 coordination with entities participating in a
 16 Warriors in Transition program, as defined
 17 in section 738(e) of the National Defense
 18 Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013
 19 (10 U.S.C. 1071 note).

20 “(C) USE OF RESOURCE PARTNERS AND
 21 DISTRICT OFFICES.—

22 “(i) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator
 23 shall—

24 “(I) ensure that Veteran Busi-
 25 ness Outreach Centers regularly par-

1 ticipate, on a nationwide basis, in the
2 Boots to Business Program; and

3 “(H) to the maximum extent
4 practicable, use district offices of the
5 Administration and a variety of other
6 resource partners and entities in ad-
7 ministering the Boots to Business
8 Program.

9 “(ii) GRANT AUTHORITY.—In carrying
10 out clause (i), the Administrator may make
11 grants to Veteran Business Outreach Cen-
12 ters, other resource partners, or other enti-
13 ties to carry out components of the Boots
14 to Business Program.

15 “(D) AVAILABILITY TO DEPARTMENT OF
16 DEFENSE AND THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.—
17 The Administrator shall make available to the
18 Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of
19 Labor information regarding the Boots to Busi-
20 ness Program, including all course materials
21 and outreach materials related to the Boots to
22 Business Program, for inclusion on the websites
23 of the Department of Defense and the Depart-
24 ment of Labor relating to the Transition Assist-
25 ance Program, in the Transition Assistance

1 Program manual, and in other relevant mate-
2 rials available for distribution from the Sec-
3 retary of Defense and the Secretary of Labor.

4 “(E) AVAILABILITY TO DEPARTMENT OF
5 VETERANS AFFAIRS.—In consultation with the
6 Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Adminis-
7 trator shall make available for distribution and
8 display on the website of the Department of
9 Veterans Affairs and at local facilities of the
10 Department of Veterans Affairs outreach mate-
11 rials regarding the Boots to Business Program,
12 which shall, at a minimum—

13 “(i) describe the Boots to Business
14 Program and the services provided; and

15 “(ii) include eligibility requirements
16 for participating in the Boots to Business
17 Program.

18 “(F) AVAILABILITY TO OTHER PARTICI-
19 PATING AGENCIES.—The Administrator shall
20 ensure information regarding the Boots to
21 Business program, including all course mate-
22 rials and outreach materials related to the
23 Boots to Business Program, is made available
24 to other participating agencies in the Transition

1 Assistance Program and upon request of other
2 agencies.

3 ~~“(5) COMPETITIVE BIDDING PROCEDURES.—~~

4 The Administration shall use relevant competitive
5 bidding procedures with respect to any contract or
6 cooperative agreement executed by the Administra-
7 tion under the Boots to Business Program.

8 ~~“(6) PUBLICATION OF NOTICE OF FUNDING OP-
9 PORTUNITY.—Not later than 30 days before the
10 deadline for submitting applications for any funding
11 opportunity under the Boots to Business Program,
12 the Administration shall publish a notice of the
13 funding opportunity.~~

14 ~~“(7) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after
15 the date of enactment of this subsection, and not
16 less frequently than annually thereafter, the Admin-
17 istrator shall submit to the Committee on Small
18 Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate and
19 the Committee on Small Business of the House of
20 Representatives a report on the performance and ef-
21 fectiveness of the Boots to Business Program,
22 which—~~

23 ~~“(A) may be included as part of another
24 report submitted to such committees by the Ad-~~

1 administrator related to the Office of Veterans
2 Business Development; and

3 “(B) shall summarize available information
4 relating to—

5 “(i) grants awarded under paragraph
6 (4)(C);

7 “(ii) the total cost of the Boots to
8 Business Program;

9 “(iii) the amount of program funds
10 used for domestic and international travel
11 expenses;

12 “(iv) the number of program partici-
13 pants using each component of the Boots
14 to Business Program;

15 “(v) the completion rates for each
16 component of the Boots to Business Pro-
17 gram;

18 “(vi) to the extent possible—

19 “(I) the demographics of pro-
20 gram participants, to include gender,
21 age, race, ethnicity, and relationship
22 to military;

23 “(II) the number of program
24 participants that connect with a dis-
25 trict office of the Administration; a

1 Veteran Business Outreach Center, or
2 another resource partner of the Ad-
3 ministration;

4 “(III) the number of program
5 participants that start a small busi-
6 ness concern;

7 “(IV) the results of the Boots to
8 Business and Boots to Business
9 Reboot course quality surveys con-
10 ducted by the Office of Veterans Busi-
11 ness Development before and after at-
12 tending each of those courses, includ-
13 ing a summary of any comments re-
14 ceived from program participants;

15 “(V) the results of the Boots to
16 Business Program outcome surveys
17 conducted by the Office of Veterans
18 Business Development, including a
19 summary of any comments received
20 from program participants; and

21 “(VI) the results of other ger-
22 mane participant satisfaction surveys;

23 “(C) an evaluation of the overall effective-
24 ness of the Boots to Business Program based

1 on each geographic region covered by the Ad-
 2 ministration during the most recent fiscal year;

3 “(D) an assessment of additional perform-
 4 ance outcome measures for the Boots to Busi-
 5 ness Program, as identified by the Adminis-
 6 trator;

7 “(E) any recommendations of the Adminis-
 8 trator for improvement of the Boots to Busi-
 9 ness Program, which may include expansion of
 10 the types of individuals who are covered individ-
 11 uals;

12 “(F) an explanation of how the Boots to
 13 Business Program has been integrated with
 14 other transition programs and related resources
 15 of the Administration and other Federal agen-
 16 cies; and

17 “(G) any additional information the Ad-
 18 ministrator determines necessary.”.

19 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

20 *This Act may be cited as the “Veteran Entrepreneur-*
 21 *ship Training Act of 2023”.*

22 **SEC. 2. BOOTS TO BUSINESS PROGRAM.**

23 *Section 32 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657b)*
 24 *is amended by adding at the end the following:*

25 “(h) **BOOTS TO BUSINESS PROGRAM.**—

1 “(1) *COVERED INDIVIDUAL DEFINED.*—*In this*
2 *subsection, the term ‘covered individual’ means—*

3 “(A) *a member of the Armed Forces, includ-*
4 *ing the National Guard or Reserves;*

5 “(B) *an individual who is participating in*
6 *the Transition Assistance Program established*
7 *under section 1144 of title 10, United States*
8 *Code;*

9 “(C) *an individual who—*

10 “(i) *served on active duty in any*
11 *branch of the Armed Forces, including the*
12 *National Guard or Reserves; and*

13 “(ii) *was discharged or released from*
14 *such service under conditions other than*
15 *dishonorable; and*

16 “(D) *a spouse or dependent of an indi-*
17 *vidual described in subparagraph (A), (B), or*
18 *(C).*

19 “(2) *ESTABLISHMENT.*—*During the period be-*
20 *ginning on the date of enactment of this subsection*
21 *and ending on September 30, 2028, the Administrator*
22 *shall carry out a program to be known as the ‘Boots*
23 *to Business Program’ to provide entrepreneurship*
24 *training to covered individuals.*

1 “(3) *GOALS.—The goals of the Boots to Business*
2 *Program are to—*

3 “(A) *provide assistance and in-depth train-*
4 *ing to covered individuals interested in business*
5 *ownership; and*

6 “(B) *provide covered individuals with the*
7 *tools, skills, and knowledge necessary to identify*
8 *a business opportunity, draft a business plan,*
9 *identify sources of capital, connect with local re-*
10 *sources for small business concerns, and start up*
11 *a small business concern.*

12 “(4) *PROGRAM COMPONENTS.—*

13 “(A) *IN GENERAL.—The Boots to Business*
14 *Program may include—*

15 “(i) *an in-person and virtual, as ap-*
16 *plicable, presentation providing exposure to*
17 *the considerations involved in self-employ-*
18 *ment and ownership of a small business*
19 *concern;*

20 “(ii) *an online, self-study course fo-*
21 *cused on the basic skills of entrepreneurship,*
22 *the language of business, and the consider-*
23 *ations involved in self-employment and*
24 *ownership of a small business concern;*

1 “(iii) *an in-person and virtual, as ap-*
2 *plicable, classroom instruction component*
3 *providing an introduction to the founda-*
4 *tions of self employment and ownership of*
5 *a small business concern; and*

6 “(iv) *in-depth training delivered*
7 *through online instruction, including an on-*
8 *line course that leads to the creation of a*
9 *business plan.*

10 “(B) *TRAVEL COSTS.—*

11 “(i) *IN GENERAL.—Subject to the other*
12 *provisions of this subparagraph, of the total*
13 *amount of grant funding that a Veteran*
14 *Business Outreach Center participating in*
15 *the Boots to Business Program receives from*
16 *the Administration, the center may not ex-*
17 *pend more than 35 percent of that funding*
18 *on costs relating to international travel*
19 *with respect to the Boots to Business Pro-*
20 *gram.*

21 “(ii) *COSTS NOT INCLUDED IN CAP.—*
22 *Costs relating to the salaries of, or stipends*
23 *for, instructors under the Boots to Business*
24 *Program shall not be included for the pur-*
25 *poses of the limitation under clause (i).*

1 “(iii) *PETITION.*—

2 “(I) *IN GENERAL.*—*A Veteran*
3 *Business Outreach Center may petition*
4 *the Administrator for the center to ex-*
5 *pend additional funds beyond the limi-*
6 *tation under clause (i) for the purposes*
7 *described in that clause.*

8 “(II) *NOTIFICATION REQUIRE-*
9 *MENT.*—*If the Administrator grants*
10 *any petition submitted under subclause*
11 *(I), the Administrator shall submit to*
12 *the Committee on Small Business and*
13 *Entrepreneurship of the Senate and the*
14 *Committee on Small Business of the*
15 *House of Representatives a notification*
16 *regarding that decision by the Admin-*
17 *istrator.*

18 “(C) *COLLABORATION.*—*The Administrator*
19 *may—*

20 “(i) *collaborate with public and pri-*
21 *ivate entities to develop course curricula for*
22 *the Boots to Business Program;*

23 “(ii) *modify program components in*
24 *coordination with entities participating in*
25 *a Warriors in Transition program, as de-*

1 *defined in section 738(e) of the National De-*
2 *fense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year*
3 *2013 (10 U.S.C. 1071 note); and*

4 *“(iii) consult with Directors of Veteran*
5 *Business Outreach Centers regarding the ne-*
6 *cessity of instructor international travel*
7 *and the feasibility of incorporating virtual*
8 *classroom components.*

9 *“(D) USE OF RESOURCE PARTNERS AND*
10 *DISTRICT OFFICES.—*

11 *“(i) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator*
12 *shall—*

13 *“(I) ensure that Veteran Business*
14 *Outreach Centers regularly participate,*
15 *on a nationwide basis, in the Boots to*
16 *Business Program; and*

17 *“(II) to the maximum extent*
18 *practicable, use district offices of the*
19 *Administration and a variety of other*
20 *resource partners and entities in ad-*
21 *ministering the Boots to Business Pro-*
22 *gram.*

23 *“(ii) GRANT AUTHORITY.—In carrying*
24 *out clause (i), the Administrator may make*
25 *grants to Veteran Business Outreach Cen-*

1 *ters, other resource partners, or other enti-*
2 *ties to carry out components of the Boots to*
3 *Business Program.*

4 “(E) AVAILABILITY TO DEPARTMENT OF DE-
5 FENSE AND THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.—*The*
6 *Administrator shall make available to the Sec-*
7 *retary of Defense and the Secretary of Labor in-*
8 *formation regarding the Boots to Business Pro-*
9 *gram, including all course materials and out-*
10 *reach materials related to the Boots to Business*
11 *Program, for inclusion on the websites of the De-*
12 *partment of Defense and the Department of*
13 *Labor relating to the Transition Assistance Pro-*
14 *gram, in the Transition Assistance Program*
15 *manual, and in other relevant materials avail-*
16 *able for distribution from the Secretary of De-*
17 *fense and the Secretary of Labor.*

18 “(F) AVAILABILITY TO DEPARTMENT OF
19 VETERANS AFFAIRS.—*In consultation with the*
20 *Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Administrator*
21 *shall make available for distribution and display*
22 *on the website of the Department of Veterans Af-*
23 *airs and at local facilities of the Department of*
24 *Veterans Affairs outreach materials regarding*

1 *the Boots to Business Program, which shall, at*
2 *a minimum—*

3 “(i) *describe the Boots to Business Pro-*
4 *gram and the services provided; and*

5 “(ii) *include eligibility requirements*
6 *for participating in the Boots to Business*
7 *Program.*

8 “(G) *AVAILABILITY TO OTHER PARTICI-*
9 *PATING AGENCIES.—The Administrator shall en-*
10 *sure information regarding the Boots to Business*
11 *program, including all course materials and out-*
12 *reach materials related to the Boots to Business*
13 *Program, is made available to other partici-*
14 *pating agencies in the Transition Assistance*
15 *Program and upon request of other agencies.*

16 “(5) *COMPETITIVE BIDDING PROCEDURES.—The*
17 *Administration shall use relevant competitive bidding*
18 *procedures with respect to any contract or cooperative*
19 *agreement executed by the Administration under the*
20 *Boots to Business Program.*

21 “(6) *PUBLICATION OF NOTICE OF FUNDING OP-*
22 *PORTUNITY.—Not later than 30 days before the dead-*
23 *line for submitting applications for any funding op-*
24 *portunity under the Boots to Business Program, the*

1 *Administration shall publish a notice of the funding*
2 *opportunity.*

3 “(7) *REPORT.*—*Not later than 180 days after the*
4 *date of enactment of this subsection, and not less fre-*
5 *quently than annually thereafter, the Administrator*
6 *shall submit to the Committee on Small Business and*
7 *Entrepreneurship of the Senate and the Committee on*
8 *Small Business of the House of Representatives a re-*
9 *port on the performance and effectiveness of the Boots*
10 *to Business Program, which—*

11 “(A) *may be included as part of another re-*
12 *port submitted to such committees by the Admin-*
13 *istrator related to the Office of Veterans Business*
14 *Development; and*

15 “(B) *shall summarize available information*
16 *relating to—*

17 “(i) *grants awarded under paragraph*
18 *(4)(D);*

19 “(ii) *the total cost of the Boots to Busi-*
20 *ness Program;*

21 “(iii) *the amount of program funds*
22 *used for domestic and international travel*
23 *expenses;*

1 “(iv) each domestic location and inter-
2 national location traveled to for Boots to
3 Business program instruction;

4 “(v) the number of program partici-
5 pants using each component of the Boots to
6 Business Program;

7 “(vi) the completion rates for each
8 component of the Boots to Business Pro-
9 gram; and

10 “(vii) to the extent possible—

11 “(I) the demographics of program
12 participants, to include gender, age,
13 race, ethnicity, and relationship to the
14 Armed Forces;

15 “(II) the number of program par-
16 ticipants that connect with a district
17 office of the Administration, a Veteran
18 Business Outreach Center, or another
19 resource partner of the Administration;

20 “(III) the number of program
21 participants that start a small busi-
22 ness concern;

23 “(IV) the results of the Boots to
24 Business and Boots to Business Reboot
25 course quality surveys conducted by the

1 *Office of Veterans Business Develop-*
2 *ment before and after attending each of*
3 *those courses, including a summary of*
4 *any comments received from program*
5 *participants;*

6 *“(V) the results of the Boots to*
7 *Business Program outcome surveys*
8 *conducted by the Office of Veterans*
9 *Business Development, including a*
10 *summary of any comments received*
11 *from program participants; and*

12 *“(VI) the results of other germane*
13 *participant satisfaction surveys;*

14 *“(C) an evaluation of the overall effective-*
15 *ness of the Boots to Business Program based on*
16 *each geographic region covered by the Adminis-*
17 *tration during the most recent fiscal year;*

18 *“(D) an assessment of additional perform-*
19 *ance outcome measures for the Boots to Business*
20 *Program, as identified by the Administrator;*

21 *“(E) any recommendations of the Adminis-*
22 *trator for improvement of the Boots to Business*
23 *Program, which may include expansion of the*
24 *types of individuals who are covered individuals;*

1 “(F) an explanation of how the Boots to
2 *Business Program* has been integrated with other
3 *transition programs* and related resources of the
4 *Administration* and other Federal agencies; and
5 “(G) any additional information the Ad-
6 *ministrator determines necessary.*”.

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