

To: NYC Regional Economic Development Council
From: Joseph Tazewell
Date: June 24, 2014
Re: Veterans Work Group Meeting

As part of the NYC Regional Economic Development Council's efforts to involve Veterans in the work of the council and to encourage participation in consolidated funding application (CFA), council staff organized a Veterans workgroup meeting at the Empire State Development offices in Manhattan on June 3. The participants of this workgroup meeting included Veteran business owners, Veterans advocacy groups, local development corporations, social services organizations, and other community stakeholders. A total of 20 people representing various organizations from across New York City attended the meeting. The meeting was approximately 90 minutes in length and consisted of the following:

- an overview of the NYC REDC and its strategic plan;
- a summary of the CFA and its associated funding opportunities;
- a presentation by Jamal Othman, Deputy Director of the NYS Division of Veterans Affairs, and Reginald Taylor, Disabled Veterans Outreach Specialist, NYC Department of Labor, on the various economic development programs that NYS offers to support Veterans; and
- a facilitated discussion, lead by council staff, on 1) the various challenges that Veterans face in finding employment upon leaving military service, and 2) the opportunities and resources available to Veteran business owners and other Veterans who are interested in playing a larger role in the State's economy .

Meeting Summary

A widening skills gap was identified as being a major barrier to veteran participation in the workforce. It was suggested that education and training are a critical piece in solving the skills gap issue. However, it was also acknowledged that the education system needs to become more "Veteran-friendly" and become better able to handle the unique situations and problems that Veterans may be facing.

Several examples were cited of ways that schools can make themselves more Veteran-friendly, including offering college credit for time-in-service, centralizing Veteran resources at schools to make them more accessible, and providing specially trained support for veterans at the various educational institutions throughout the region.

CUNY was cited as a university that allows Veterans, who are matriculating students, to earn up to 18 credits in United States Armed Forces Institute courses, in which they have passed final exams, and for other military education and training. In addition, students proposing unique or interdisciplinary majors through CUNY's individualized degree program, CUNY Baccalaureate, may be eligible to receive up to 30 credits for documented military course work or training. SUNY also offers various programs and resources for Veterans. A representative from St. Francis College suggested that its college faculty needed training in dealing with Veterans.

Another suggestion was made to connect employers with community-based Veteran organizations to help educate employers on the unique problems that Veterans may face in the workplace.

The discussion then addressed the benefits that Veterans have access to, but may not be fully aware of. Some attention was brought to the eligibility restrictions of some of these programs, including limiting, in some cases, the eligibility to only post 9/11 Veterans; or limiting eligibility to only those under the age of 55. It was pointed out that this may be a problem for New York since a large number of Veterans in the state are over the age of 55, while only 17% of Veterans in New York are post 9/11.

The workgroup meeting concluded with the recognition that, while there are several institutions, both public and private, that offer benefits and programs for Veterans, the key to ensuring success for Veterans transitioning from the military to the civilian workforce is to 1) increase the accessibility of these programs by making these institutions (universities, government, employers, etc.) more Veteran-friendly, and 2) by more effectively connecting Veterans with these programs and benefits.

Veterans Work Group Meeting Attendees

Tracy	McDermott	Bronx Borough President’s Office
Wendy	McClinton	Black Veterans for Social Justice
Fredrick	Shuart	Services for the Underserved
Stanley	Scriven	Easter Seals
Rita	Stella	Easter Seals
Jukay	Hsu	Coalition for Queens
Mackenzie	Deary	Coalition for Queens
Craig	Carvana	America Works
David	Howard	The Doe Fund
Jamal	Othman	NYS Veterans Affairs
Reginald	Taylor	Department of Labor
Dr. Allen	Burdowski	St. Francis College
Kelly	Dougherty	New York City Small Business Services

ESD Staff

Joseph	Tazewell	ESD
Allison	Auldridge	ESD
Andrew	Fletcher	ESD
Marion	Phillips	ESD
Nicole	Jordon	ESD
Renee	Kim	ESD - NYC REDC Intern
Drew	Podgorski	ESD - NYC REDC Intern