

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
Medical Center  
2360 East Pershing Boulevard  
Cheyenne, WY 82001

MEMORANDUM

Date: 15 July 2019  
From: Charles Drebing, PhD, Acting Chief of Mental Health, Cheyenne VA Healthcare System  
Subject: Recommendation for Support for the Veterans Business Owners Initiative  
To: To Whom It May Concern

I am writing in the support of efforts to expand the work of the Veterans Business Owners Initiative (VBOI). As a clinical psychologist and researcher in the field of vocational services, and as an administrator in VA mental health programming, I am very aware of the need for services and programming that support disabled Veterans seeking to return to employment by starting their own business. I have worked with the VBOI for the past 15 years and know of its remarkable accomplishments. I have been asked to write a letter regarding its contribution to the recovery of Veterans seeking to return to work, and am happy to do so.

For the past 25 years I have been conducting research on vocational services for Veterans with disabilities. During that time, I've seen a variety of new models of services, and research on the interests and needs of Veterans seeking vocational services. I don't know of a more innovative intervention than the VA Supported Self Employment, and it's partner the Veterans Business Owner's Initiative. They have provided education to over 700 Veterans seeking to better their lives through entrepreneurship. They have a success rate of 50% for participants seeking to start a business -- a success rate that rivals the success of the best evidence-based Supported Employment. For Veterans starting even small part-time businesses, I've seen a significant reduction in the feelings of alienation and disability, and an increase in community integration and empowerment through the VBOI. I have studied other small business incubators, including programs designed specifically for Veterans. None have been successful in meeting the needs of Veterans with disabilities seeking to start a business. None have built in the clinical and peer supports and education that the VBOI provides.

I have recently moved from the Bedford VA Medical Center in Bedford, MA, to the Cheyenne VA Medical Center in Cheyenne, Wyoming. I am planning to bring the VBOI to this part of the country to serve Veterans here. I would strongly encourage you to provide support and partnership this exceptional program. With additional supports, the number of Veterans served can be substantially expanded.

Please feel free to contact me if I can answer any questions.

Sincerely,



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