

By the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security; and Senator Garcia

583-00808-18

2018104c1

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to small business financial
3 assistance; creating s. 295.231, F.S.; creating the
4 Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program
5 within the Department of Economic Opportunity;
6 directing Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., to administer
7 the program; defining terms; authorizing the
8 corporation to accept and administer moneys
9 appropriated for such grants; specifying grant
10 amounts; limiting the amount that a small business may
11 receive under the program; requiring a small business
12 to apply to and enter into an agreement with the
13 corporation to receive grants; prescribing minimum
14 criteria for such agreements; requiring the
15 corporation to notify the appropriate regional small
16 business development center of a small business'
17 participation; requiring the department to adopt
18 certain rules; prescribing reporting requirements;
19 providing for termination of the program; providing
20 appropriations; providing an effective date.

21
22 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

23
24 Section 1. Section 295.231, Florida Statutes, is created to
25 read:

26 295.231 Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program.-
27 The Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program is created
28 within the Department of Economic Opportunity to be administered
29 by Florida Is For Veterans, Inc. The purpose of the program is

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30 to stimulate investment in the state's economy by providing
31 grants to small businesses that hire and employ honorably
32 discharged veterans or disabled veterans with service-connected
33 disabilities.

34 (1) As used in this section, the term:

35 (a) "Corporation" means Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.

36 (b) "Small business" means an independently owned and
37 operated, for-profit, privately held business that employs 50 or
38 fewer persons; generates \$1 million or less in annual revenue;
39 and has maintained its principal place of business in this state
40 for at least the previous 4 calendar years.

41 (2) The corporation may accept and administer moneys
42 appropriated to the department for transfer to the corporation
43 to provide grants to encourage small businesses in this state to
44 hire and employ veterans.

45 (3) A small business that hires a veteran as a new employee
46 may receive a one-time grant of:

47 (a) Fifteen hundred dollars for each newly hired veteran,
48 as defined in s. 1.01(14).

49 (b) Three thousand dollars for each newly hired disabled
50 veteran, as that term is described in s. 295.07(1)(a).

51 (4) The total dollar amount of grants awarded to a
52 participating small business under subsection (3) may not exceed
53 \$10,500 per fiscal year.

54 (5) A small business must apply to, and enter into an
55 agreement with, the corporation in order to participate in the
56 program. The agreement must require that the small business:

57 (a) Hire and employ for at least 1 year a qualifying
58 veteran before becoming eligible for a grant awarded under

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59 subsection (3).

60 (b) Report information regarding the employment status of
61 each qualifying veteran, if requested to do so by the
62 corporation.

63 (c) Pay each qualifying veteran an amount equal to at least
64 90 percent of the annual median income for veterans in this
65 state at the time of hire, based on the most recent American
66 Community Survey 1-year estimates published by the United States
67 Census Bureau.

68 (d) Use any awarded grant moneys to facilitate the creation
69 of additional jobs for and employment of veterans by the small
70 business; however, grant moneys may be used only for
71 manufacturing, equipment, and facility expenses or other
72 operating costs or fixed capital outlay projects.

73 (e) Not receive any additional grant for rehiring a veteran
74 who it previously claimed as an employee for purposes of
75 obtaining funds under the program.

76 (f) Is eligible to receive a grant award only for a veteran
77 initially hired on or after July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2023.

78 (6) The corporation shall notify the regional small
79 business development center that serves the county in which a
80 participating small business is located of the participation of
81 the small business in the grant program in order to facilitate
82 improved access to the resources of the Florida Small Business
83 Development Center Network.

84 (7) The Department of Economic Opportunity shall adopt
85 rules to implement and administer this section which specify
86 requirements for the application and approval process and the
87 documentation necessary to claim grant moneys awarded under this

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88 section.

89 (8) By each December 31 for the duration of the grant
90 program, the corporation shall provide an annual report to the
91 Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the
92 House of Representatives on the grant program's progress and
93 outcomes for the preceding fiscal year. The report must include
94 the following:

95 (a) An accounting of how the corporation used the state
96 funds it received for the grant program.

97 (b) The number of small businesses receiving grant funds.

98 (c) The number of veterans and disabled veterans employed
99 by each small business receiving grant funds.

100 (d) The salary paid to each veteran employed.

101 (e) The length of time for which the small business
102 employed each veteran.

103 (f) The grant program's economic benefit to the state and
104 the performance-based metrics and methodologies used to
105 calculate the grant program's economic benefit to the state.

106 (9) The grant program terminates October 1, 2024.

107 Section 2. Beginning July 1, 2018, and for the 2018-2019
108 through the 2022-2023 fiscal years, the sum of \$500,000 in
109 nonrecurring funds from the State Economic Enhancement and
110 Development Trust Fund is appropriated to the Department of
111 Economic Opportunity for transfer to Florida Is For Veterans,
112 Inc., to contract with the Department of Economic Opportunity to
113 implement and administer the Veterans Employment Small Business
114 Grant Program. The corporation may award grant moneys up to a
115 maximum of \$500,000 per fiscal year. The corporation may spend
116 up to \$25,000 per fiscal year of funds transferred by the

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117 department for staffing and administrative costs associated with
118 implementation and administration of the program. If any
119 appropriated funds remain upon termination of the program,
120 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., shall transfer those funds to the
121 Department of Economic Opportunity for deposit in the State
122 Economic Enhancement and Development Trust Fund.

123 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.