

HB 801

2018

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  
 25 to 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  
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  
46        employee may receive a one-time grant of:

47        (a) One thousand five hundred dollars for each newly hired  
48        veteran, 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  
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  
64 least 90 percent of the annual median income for veterans in  
65 this state at the time of hire, based on the most recent  
66 American Community Survey 1-year estimates published by the  
67 United States Census Bureau.

68       (d) Use any awarded grant moneys to facilitate the  
69 creation of additional jobs for and employment of veterans by  
70 the small 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  
74 veteran whom it previously claimed as an employee for purposes  
75 of obtaining funds under the program.

76 (f) Be eligible to receive a grant award only for a  
77 veteran initially hired on or after July 1, 2018, through June  
78 30, 2023.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

108 Section 2. Beginning July 1, 2018, and for the 2018-2019  
109 through the 2022-2023 fiscal years, the sum of \$500,000 in  
110 nonrecurring funds from the State Economic Enhancement and  
111 Development Trust Fund is appropriated to the Department of  
112 Economic Opportunity for transfer to Florida Is For Veterans,  
113 Inc., to contract with the Department of Economic Opportunity to  
114 implement and administer the Veterans Employment Small Business  
115 Grant Program. The corporation may award grant moneys up to  
116 \$500,000 per fiscal year. The corporation may spend up to  
117 \$25,000 per fiscal year of funds transferred by the department  
118 for staffing and administrative costs associated with  
119 implementation and administration of the program. If any  
120 appropriated funds remain upon termination of the program,  
121 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., shall transfer those funds to the  
122 Department of Economic Opportunity for deposit in the State  
123 Economic Enhancement and Development Trust Fund.

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