



USING THE VA ACCELERATOR PROGRAM TO HELP FARMER VETERANS

**DESMA BROOKS, FARMER VETERAN
AND PHILLIP SELLEH, VA ACCELERATOR PROGRAM**

**AGRABILITY VIRTUAL NATIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP
THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2018
11:00 A.M. ET**

BASIC WEBINAR INSTRUCTIONS

- Audio available through computer or phone.
- Check sound via Communicate menu at top left
- Closed captions: use arrow to expand or contact the Media Viewer window. You may have to enter some log-in information.
- Expand/contract any of the windows in the right-hand column with the arrows. May need to do this to see video of presenter.
- Expand/contract the size of the right-hand column.

BASIC WEBINAR INSTRUCTIONS

Questions and comments

- Click Chat icon at top right of screen (it should turn blue). Enter message in box, choose who to send it to, and click send. You may enter questions about the presentation at any time. Please send to “All Panelists”.
- In addition, during the Q & A period, if you have a web microphone, click the “Raise Hand” icon to indicate that you have a question. We will enable your microphone or phone connection.

BASIC WEBINAR INSTRUCTIONS

- 4 quick survey questions + opportunity to share comments
- Session recorded and archived with PowerPoint files at www.agrability.org/Online-Training
- Problems: use chat window or email jonesp@purdue.edu



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- **AgrAbility:** USDA–sponsored program that assists farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities.
 - Partners land–grant universities with disability services organizations.
Currently 20 state projects
 - National AgrAbility Project: Led by Purdue’s Breaking New Ground Resource Center.
 - Partners include:
 - Goodwill of the Finger Lakes
 - APRIL (Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living)
 - Colorado State University
 - Washington State University
 - More information available at www.agrability.org

HOW A VETERAN SUCCESSFULLY STARTED A FARM WITH THE VA'S HELP



Who am I?

- Desma Brooks – I am a farmer, who happens to be a disabled veteran. That's my logo.
- Enlisted in 1996, Indiana Army National Guard. Afghanistan 2004-2005 Iraq 2007-2009 Retired Medically in 2014.
- 80 % Disabled by VA Rating
- I used VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment benefits to make a business of my farm.
- I am a member of Homegrown by Heros and Indiana Grown



How did I find out about VA-VR?

- www.va.gov This is the best starting place I could imagine.
- Case Manager- Your POC for all areas VA-VR. (You are at the mercy of your case manager, be nice to them.)
- Operation Ground Work and VA Accelerator/Center for Business Acceleration
<https://centerforbusinessacceleration.com/veteran>
- I asked for assistance building my farm into an actual business, with a plan, logo, marketing plan, budget, and understanding how it all works.
- Word of Mouth. Very few VRCs are aware of this program.



What is the VA Accelerator?

- The VA Accelerator is a program started by VA to help plan, start, and grow a business.
- Veteran Team- A guide and several folks behind the scenes incase you need assistance. Business Plan, Marketing Plan, Financial Plan, 5 yr Plan.
- 1 Entire Year. It is challenging. You could do it in less time, if this sort of thing comes naturally.
- Issues? Do I really want to be a business owner? How does farming relate to the scenario?
- It is all mine. Each step is a puzzle piece.



How has working with VR and the VA Accelerator program benefited me?

- Business Plan-with 5 year financial projections. (It's ok to change it. It's a living document.)
- Marketing plan- Professionally designed flyers and brochures- With my text and pictures
- Website- www.3rdtimesa.farm
- Equipment- 6 Row Seeder, 4 row seeder, Vacuum Seeder with plates, Bed prep rake.
Pending BCS Walking Tractor/tiller and rotary plow.
- Ch 3I stipend while completing the course.
- Pro/Cons- See Above- PowerPoint-

Where am I now?





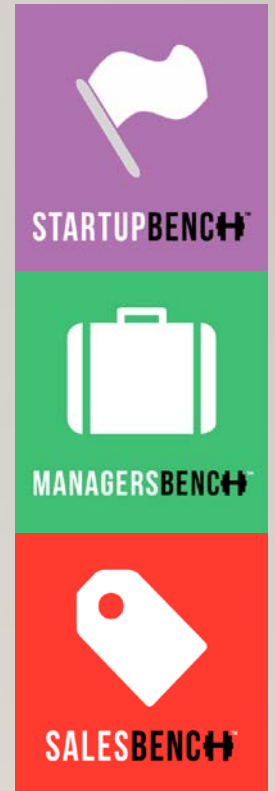
VA Accelerator program

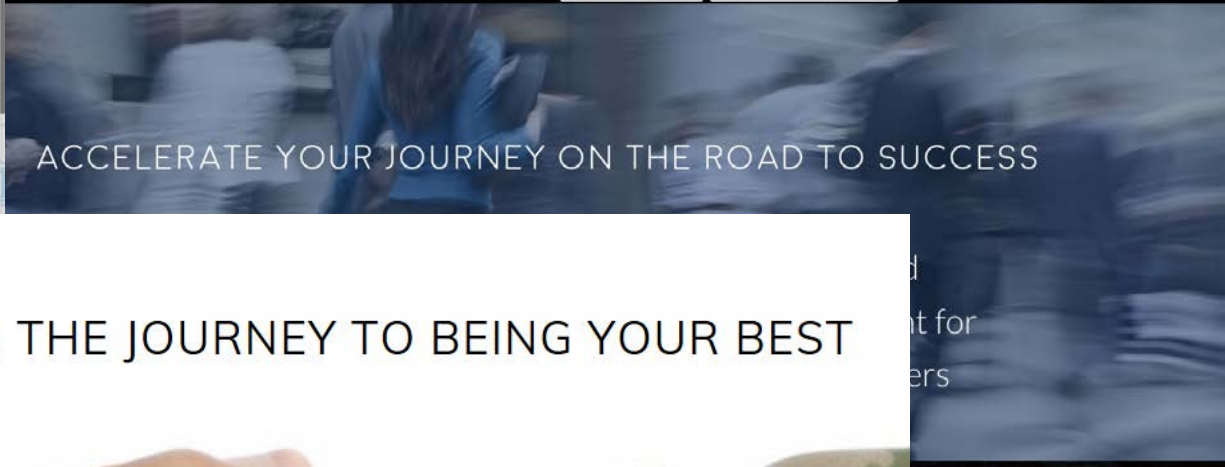
- The VA Accelerator is the only program of its kind designed to help Disabled Veterans launch their own company or expand their existing business.
- The VA Accelerator was founded as an innovation request by the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) Services to develop a consistent national approach to self-employment training as outlined in the VR&E M28R.
- The Center for Business Acceleration maintains a VA-assigned facility code.



VA Accelerator program education:

- The Business Plan Accelerator Curriculum covers all the important topics that an aspiring entrepreneur needs to know when creating his/her business plan. From their future roles and responsibilities, through industry research and market segmentation, all the way to structuring a business.
- The Capture Management curriculum offers the veterans who want to develop marketing and sales skills an introduction to important techniques and strategies that will help them achieve that, and a way to round out their knowledge in new and effective ways. It gives them all the necessary tools and information to become an expert in this field, which will help them have a successful business.





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