



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Venture Hive Veterans Program opens Applications for its 2016 Accelerator Class**

**FORT WALTON BEACH, Fla.** – Recently the City of Fort Walton Beach was named a top ten city for veteran entrepreneurs in a study conducted by USAA and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. To support the veteran entrepreneurship community within the Emerald Coast, Venture Hive Fort Walton Beach is now accepting applications for its 2016 Venture Hive Veterans Program. The program aims to connect highly qualified veteran, military dependent-led businesses or concepts from Department of Defense employees from the Fort Walton Beach and NW Florida area with the support and training they need to scale their businesses to the next level.

The benefits of the Veteran Accelerator program include a world-class curriculum of highly practical workshops and training sessions, weekly personal mentoring from a vetted network of local, national and international entrepreneurs and experts, exposure to qualified investors, dedicated office space in our collaborative offices in Fort Walton Beach and an official Demo Day during the week of June 6, 2016.

Applications for the Venture Hive Veteran Accelerator Program can be submitted online at [fwb.venturehive.com](http://fwb.venturehive.com). Applications will be accepted until February 12, 2016. Any U.S.-based high-growth veteran and veteran spouse-led, or Department of Defense employee owned businesses is eligible to apply. The class will run from March 14, 2016 through June 6, 2016. Companies selected to participate will be announced on February 23, 2016.

“We take great care in building individuals to reach their potential so they can execute on their visions – no matter how impossible it may seem,” said Susan Amat, Ph.D., founder of Venture Hive. “Our program focuses on building up participants so that they can execute on their visions for their business and we make sure the support is there from the beginning stages all the way through the exit.”

The Venture Hive Veterans Program, hosted at Venture Hive Fort Walton Beach, was inaugurated in Fall 2015 with the launch of the first class of the Venture Hive Fort Walton Beach Veterans Accelerator, an intensive on-site training program that attracted high-growth veteran-led startups from across the U.S. to move to Fort Walton Beach. The 2016 program will focus on supporting both tech and non-tech local North Florida based companies in expanding and growing their businesses.

“For me, the Venture Hive Veteran Program was an incredible experience. I was blown away by the amount of support that was readily available to us,” said Navy veteran Bryan Gonzales, CEO of Drones Unlimited, a 2015 recipient of Florida’s Governor’s Award for young entrepreneurs. “It’s amazing how far my startup has come from going through this program. Venture Hive has allowed me to build a strong foundation along with teaching me valuable lessons in gaining traction through different angles.

Looking back from before the program and now, I feel more guided towards owning a successful business.”

According to Lloyd Reshard, an Air Force veteran and CEO of Cognitive Big Data Systems, “our company was transformed, and we witnessed the transformation of the other participating companies as well, with the knowledge (from Venture Hive) on how to build a highly scalable business.”

The Venture Hive Veteran Accelerator is open to Fort Walton Beach and NW Florida area businesses that are developing unique products and services to address a clear market need. To be eligible, at least one of the business’s primary founders must be a veteran, military dependent or Department of Defense employee. Participants should be prepared to devote 15-plus hours a week during the program to training and mentoring sessions in addition to their normal business duties. Businesses are expected to have a minimum viable product, business model, and revenue streams.

Apply for the 2016 Venture Hive Veteran Accelerator program at [fwb.venturehive.com](http://fwb.venturehive.com).

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#### ABOUT VENTURE HIVE

Venture Hive creates, tests and validates the content and software tools that corporations, governments, and universities need in running innovation management, economic development, and entrepreneurship programs. Through our programs and platform, stakeholders have transparency, program directors have clarity, and entrepreneurs have the resources, training, and support to build better companies to spur innovation, technology commercialization, and job creation. [www.VentureHive.com](http://www.VentureHive.com) @venturehive @vhvets

#### ABOUT FORT WALTON BEACH

Revealed as one of 2014’s 10 Happiest Cities in America according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Research, the city of Fort Walton Beach rests in the heart of Florida’s famed Emerald Coast. Serving roughly 20,000 residents, city leadership and staff maintain a commitment to providing high quality, personalized services to visitors and residents while actively supporting the advanced technological pursuits of its military and business communities. To learn more, visit [www.fwb.org/](http://www.fwb.org/).