



REINTEGRATION AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF UKRAINIAN VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

What is the problem?

Ukraine is home to over 1.2M veterans – a number that has more than doubled since the 2022 full-scale invasion, approximately 30% of whom are living with a disability. The economic and social inclusion of veterans and their families – including the families of fallen soldiers – is a key priority for Ukraine's recovery. Starting a business is one key avenue for veterans and their families to gain economic independence, and reintegrate effectively into civilian life, whilst contributing to the wider economic recovery of war-affected communities. According to a recent national survey, two thirds of veterans express a desire to start their own business – but less than 10% have access to government or donor-supported programmes, due to a lack of awareness, bureaucratic barriers, and limited readiness. (VeteranFund, 2024; IREX, 2024).





Mental health also remains a major employment barrier, with over 70% of Ukrainian veterans citing psychological challenges as a top obstacle (VeteranFund, 2024). Targeted support is needed to support veterans and their families to start and grow a business, including financial literacy, business training, and local peer support networks – especially in rural communities where services are fragmented or absent (Cedos, 2024).



I wasn't after money, but knowledge. I wanted to learn more about business because I hadn't studied it.

PROGRAMME PARTICIPANT

Veterans face multiple barriers – psychological, social, and economic – that limit their ability to engage in entrepreneurial activities and access available public or donor-supported economic opportunities. Key gaps and barriers include:

- Fear of starting a business
- Psychological challenges after military service (incl amongst family members)
- Challenges in adapting to civilian life
- Challenges in community and social interaction
- Lack of knowledge about triggers and trauma-informed care among service providers
- Lack of comprehensive support programmes that integrate services with multilayered support
- Changed values and unwillingness to come back to old jobs
- Lack of business skills
- Lack of information about opportunities
- Lack of systemic support before and after business grants application
- Lack of knowledge and experience-sharing fora
- Lack of motivation

How People in Need is supporting veterans and their families

PIN provides holistic support to veterans and their families to address the various barriers they are facing, through an integrated Livelihoods-Protection programming model. Our tried-and-tested approaches foster the resilience of individuals and their families, through improved wellbeing, self-reliance, mental health and economic prospects. PIN partners with local authorities, state employment centres, local business, and local civil society organisations to promote the programme's sustainability and impact:

- ✓ Provision of small business grants for economic empowerment (up to \$5,000 per business)
- ✓ Provision of training and mentoring (including financial literacy, business training, soft skills training, and consultations with experienced entrepreneurs and specialists in various business sectors)
- ✓ Provision of psychosocial support for veterans and their family members where needed
- ✓ Links with the private sector
- ✓ Partnering with State Employment Centres to complement government-led grant schemes with soft-component package





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I realized it was time to grow. I decided to work officially, pay taxes, and stop hiding from them. I had always dreamed of opening a real salon – with a sign and a separate space. And thanks to the grant support, I was able to make it happen.

PROGRAMME PARTICIPANT

Cost examples: Supporting 100 businesses, benefiting 290 veterans, family members and employees, costs \$10,000 per business, including a \$5,000 grant, and the provision of all trainings and follow-up support. Complementing a state-led business grant-giving scheme with PIN's package of trainings and support costs approximately \$3,000 per business per year.

