

# Arkansas Business Navigator

## Podcast Episode 17: Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce's New Small Business Series, SBA Creates New Military Spouse Business Program



**[Brandon]** Hello and welcome to the Arkansas Business Navigator Podcast, the show that reviews U.S. Small Business Administration and Arkansas Business Navigator resources available to support small business owners and entrepreneurs in the Natural state. I'm your host, Brandon Mathews, and in today's episode I speak with Trish Villines of the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce, to discuss a new video series they launched called Small Business Breaks. We'll talk about what these videos are, how to access them, and some of the topics they feature. After that, we'll take a quick look at a new entrepreneurship training course designed for military spouses and how you can tap into that resource. Let's dive in.

**[Intro Music]**

**[Brandon Mathews]** Hey, Trish, thank you so much for joining me on the Arkansas Business Navigator podcast. For those out there who don't know who you are, what you do, can you just give us a brief introduction about who you're with and your guys' role in the Arkansas Business Navigator program?

**[Trish Villines]** Yeah. Thanks, Brendan. Thanks for having me. I'm Trish Salons and I work for the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce. And there I oversee a affiliated program called the Arkansas Institute for Performance Excellence. And we primarily run the Governors Quality Award program, which is a program that helps businesses improve. So when you the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center reached out to the state chamber about being a spoke for the Arkansas Business Navigator grant. It was a really good fit with my role because I'm already out there helping businesses on a regular basis. And our portion of the grant has really been to focus on reaching small business owners in rural areas so that they know what resources are out there through the Arkansas Business Navigator Program and the SBA, TDC and the US SBA.

**[Brandon]** Can you give us an example of some of those kind of rural outreach events that you guys have had over the last several months?

**[Trish]** Yeah, we've called on the Arkansas business just and we have been everywhere. We've been to Newport, we've been to Paragould, Russellville, Clarksville, Huntsville. We're going to Penkridge this later this week. And what we do is we have a representative from the Arkansas

Business Navigator program or the local SBA, ASBTDC, and some of those areas come out to a free meal, which that usually draws a crowd. And we have a lunch. And the Arkansas Business Navigator program will give an overview of their programs and services, and then the SBA will give an overview of their products and services. Then we work with the local chambers in those areas and they help identify four or five resources for small businesses like maybe a CPA or maybe an insurance person or a financial advisor. And we well, after we have those formal presentations on ABN and SBA, we ask those panelists some questions about what's the best insurance to go with, You know, what are the insurance must haves for a small business or how do I know if I want to be a LLC or a sole proprietor or an S Corp or a C Corp? And so just getting some of those ideas out there and those thoughts out there for either someone who's just opened a small business and is kind of working through all of the minutia, or for someone who's thinking about opening a small business, we just make sure that those rural, small businesses know there are lots of resources available to them.

**[Brandon]** So, let's talk about this video series you've created. If anybody's been paying attention to the state chambers, social media or LinkedIn, you've seen these videos popping up called, "Small Business Breaks." Trish, can you tell us what those are and kind of where that idea came from? Sure.

**[Trish]** So, in addition to hosting the Arkansas businesses events around the state, we wanted to have some virtual tools or access tools that would be easily accessed, that would give some of those key pieces of advice to someone who's just started a business or was thinking about starting a business. And I started out thinking that the videos were going to be about 15 minutes long, and that is just too much content. And the more I thought about it and the more I visited with small business owners, they are so busy that sometimes they don't have time to come to a luncheon or even much a 15-minute video. So we kind of formed it after kind of a newsbreak kind of thought or idea, and we said, okay, let's do these 5- to 6-, or seven-minute videos with some key information about some really hot topics for business owners. And so we just kind of called them the small business breaks. And so, my thought was, if a small business owner is sitting in the car line waiting to pick up the kiddos from school, they might be scrolling on our Vimeo page or our Facebook page and have the opportunity to click on some of these topics and get some good advice. It's terrific. And what are kind of some of the different topics or ideas that you discuss in these videos? Yeah. So, we had eight different topics. Two of them were around either hiring an employee or letting an employee go. So, we've got, you know, you're hired onboarding your first employee. We've got we're letting you go, staying out of legal trouble. We were super fortunate that Wright Lindsey Jennings, a law firm that is a chamber member, and they stepped up to the plate to come in and provide some sound advice on these different videos that we've produced, a couple others that kind of fall under that. The law firm specialty are the 1099 don't make a mess of misclassification. We have a lot of employers out there that think they can just contract out all of their work and that they don't have to have employees. And so kind of clarifying some of the information on that. And then another one that the law firm helped with Write Lindsey Jennings was tax tips, how, when and who to pay.

So a lot of information. But I mean, T.J. Logan is the lawyer that presented on that one. And he does a great job kind of navigating helping a business navigate where to go on the website, the Arkansas website, and giving people some advice on even some of the changes that came out of this last fiscal session. Social media, in a nutshell, was a great one that we had. There's a local realtor around central Arkansas, Ron Stevens, and he is a very active on social media. And he came out and was interviewed about, you know, just some good ideas on branding yourself on social media and how to get out there and what people are looking for. And then we had another fun one, because I work for the State Chamber of Commerce. There is a group in Arkansas called the Arkansas Economic Developers and Chamber Executive Group, and it is an association of economic developers and chamber executives, and they're the executive director for that program is Candace Lawrence, and she is also an employee of the State Chamber. And she discussed getting connected and the benefits of a local chamber. I don't think small business owners realize that they might spend \$500 on that initial membership in a chamber in their local community. But then that chamber is going to become that businesses advocate and will recommend that business to anybody who's asking and will have a whole host of different promotional items and opportunities to network and get connected in the community. And that's a great way for a small business to be successful. And then, you know, one of the things that probably the biggest thing that business owners are concerned about is, you know, funding and money. And so it's all met or is with First Security Bank and they have a huge SBA lending program at First Security Bank, along with many of the other banks in Arkansas. But she did a segment on the different products and services that the SBA offers, you know, and how much down they're looking for and what are the terms to pay those pay those loans off. And so, she gives a lot of good advice on the segment that we're calling Money Matters, Small Business Lending. The last segment, I've talked about them all. So all but one, just go ahead and mention the last one. We were really fortunate to have mainstream technologies, which is a pretty large I.T. services firm here in Arkansas. In the state of Arkansas. They have a presence in Conway and Little Rock in northwest Arkansas. And they came out and did a segment that we called Talking Tech Tips on keeping private information safe. And those small business owners are just as vulnerable to, you know, those phishing attempts, that customer data, you know, is the lifeblood of how a business operates. And so, there's really some good information out there on ways to stay, to stay safe online, using, you know, electronic payment methods and that kind of thing, and using email for your main form of communication. The small business owners really need to keep that in mind, too. And lastly, how do people access these videos? I think you mentioned Vimeo earlier, but just tell us how we can get these videos out to small business owners and entrepreneurs across Arkansas, right? So, they are out on the Arkansas State Chamber Facebook page, the Arkansas Business Navigator, social media pages as well. They have been posting those. And we're going to make sure that they're all posted on the Arkansas Business Navigator Web page as well. And the other thing is that the Arkansas Economic Developers and Chamber Executive Group is going to send all of the links out to all of their members. So hopefully we'll see some of our local chambers downloading them and linking them up with their own pages and using them as much as possible.

**[Brandon]** Well, that's terrific. And you can definitely count on us here to put it in the show notes for those of you who want to see it. We'll link to the videos and the different social media channels that Trish mentioned, But yeah. Tricia, thanks again so much for being on here. Thank you for the work that you're doing the program, and best of luck to the rest of the rest of the year. Yeah, you too, Brandon. Thanks for having me and helping highlight this. It was a labor of love, so I'm really glad to see that the final product didn't come to life, and it was really exactly what I envisioned. Yeah, I think it. They all came together quite well. So once again, that was small business breaks, eight different short video series. So just like the podcast, we don't want to overwhelm you with a bunch of information. We know you're busy. Find those on the state chambers, social media page, LinkedIn and other places and again, we'll link to them in the show notes that. Thanks, Trish. Have a great day. All right. You see, Brandon, Have a good one.

### **[Transition Music]**

**[Brandon]** On July 17, the US Small Business Administration launched a new business training program tailored to military spouses entitled, "The Military Spouse Path to Business Program." The program comes from executive orders from President Biden which strengthens economic opportunity for military and Veteran spouses, caregivers, and survivors. Now, you may be thinking, that sounds kind of unusual. But when you consider that nearly 1 in 5 military spouses are unemployed nationwide, you start to see why measures are being taken to close the gap, especially when the unemployment rate is at record levels of 3.7%. Plus, it's not just active-duty spouses that face this challenge. Reserve and National Guard spouses must balance their careers against the challenges of their spouses being deployed or being called active service. According to SBA Arkansas District Office, [quote on the potential opportunity this would have for Arkansas and VOSB and their families]. Military personnel are also welcome to take the course, and it will follow the structure of "Boots to Business" and "Boots to Business Reboot" currently offered. Military spouses interested in taking the course can sign up for an in-person or virtual class or reach out to their local Veterans Business Outreach Center or SBA District Office to obtain more information.

### **[Transition Music]**

**[Brandon]** Alright everyone, it's time to review events happening around the state. Coming up in August, I'm going to be hosting a virtual workshop entitled, "Small Business Podcast Fundamentals." Attendees will learn how to start a podcast, whether it is right for your business, and review some of the different tools needed to get started. The date hasn't been set yet, but you can go to the Arkansas Business Navigator website in show notes and view our event page to see when it will be. Trust me, you don't want to miss it.

ABN is also hosting a 2-part Food Serve Start Up series on August 8 and 11. This series will be online, and there is an application to participate. Ideal candidates for the program are Arkansas entrepreneurs who want to start a food service business, have business concept ideas, and don't know where to start. The two sessions are a total of 3 hours, but it will be well worth your

time. Contact Angela Gardner at ABN if you have questions. Her contact information and how to register are in the show notes. The deadline is August 3, so you better act quickly!

**[Outro Music]**

**[Brandon]** Thanks for listening to the podcast. Consider subscribing to get notified when new episodes drop. If you found the information useful, we'd really appreciate it if you could leave a review on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you listen. If you want to ask a question and have it answered on the show, go [uaex.uada.edu/abn-podcast](http://uaex.uada.edu/abn-podcast) and complete the form. The Arkansas Business Navigator Podcast is produced by Brandon L. Mathews and Kamelle Gomez. Our music was created by Music Unlimited from Pixabay. The Arkansas Business Navigator is a program of the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center hosted by UA Little Rock and is funded in part through a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration. All opinions, conclusions, and/or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SBA. To learn more about Arkansas Business Navigator or how to access free resources, go to [arbusinessnavigator.com](http://arbusinessnavigator.com).