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MBDA Announces Funding Opportunity to Operate 30 Business Centers Across the United States and Puerto Rico

Business Centers will partner with MBDA to extend efforts to support the growth and competitiveness of minority-owned businesses

WASHINGTON (September 29, 2010) - The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) announced a nationwide competitive solicitation for applications for candidates to operate 30 Business Centers throughout the country. The Centers will provide strategic business consulting services to help increase financing, public- and private-sector contracting opportunities and related awards to minority businesses, creating and retaining jobs and growing minority-owned firms.

“Our goal is to create the foundation for the next generation of \$100 million minority-owned firms,” said David A. Hinson, MBDA’s national director. “These Business Centers will be the service delivery providers that will help us reach that goal. The Center operators will be key partners in achieving MBDA’s mission and assisting minority-owned firms as they strive to grow to size, scale and capacity to compete both domestically and internationally.”

MBDA intends to award 30 individual cooperative agreements to manage and run the Business Centers beginning April 1, 2011. The grant award period under this solicitation is five years and successful applicants will initially be funded for the first award year with subsequent funding periods subject to Business Center performance and funding availability. Awards will range from \$225,000 to \$590,000 annually. MBDA anticipates a total of \$8.7 million will be available annually to fund all the Business Centers from fiscal year 2011 through fiscal year 2015.

Each Business Center is strategically located in areas with significant levels of minority populations and minority-owned firms. The Centers, however, are not limited by geographic region and may serve minority businesses in all fifty states and Puerto Rico.

“The Business Centers are considered a valuable arm of the MBDA nationwide network, and as such, must collaborate with one another, MBDA staff and other strategic partners to serve minority-owned businesses and achieve program goals,” said Alex Doñé, associate director for business development at MBDA. “To reach our goals, we need to encourage minority-owned firms to look at new ways to grow, including mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures and strategic partnerships. The Business Center staff will be integral in helping firms grow bigger and faster.”

The 30 Business Centers will support MBDA's existing network of regional government offices to expand the reach and assistance provided to minority communities and businesses across the country.

Eligible Applicants:

For-profit entities (including but not limited to sole-proprietorships, partnerships, limited liability companies and corporations), non-profit organizations, state and local government entities, American Indian Tribes and educational institutions are all eligible to apply to operate a Business Center. Entities may apply to operate more than one Center; however, individual applications for each location are required.

Submission Requirements:

Applicants must review the full Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) and adhere to program details and instructions for submitting an application. The FFO can be accessed at www.Grants.gov or www.mbda.gov.

Applications must be submitted electronically and time-stamped at www.Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) on November 10, 2010.

MBDA will conduct pre-application conference calls on October 20 and 25. The conference calls will provide a background and summary of the MBDA Business Center program, as well as provide potential applicants with the opportunity to ask questions about the program and the application process. The times, locations and registration instructions for the pre-application conferences will be posted on MBDA's website shortly. Applicants should visit MBDA at www.mbda.gov for more information.

Note: The MBDA Business Center program is not a grant program to start or expand an individual business. Applications must be for operation of a Business Center to provide business consulting services to eligible minority-owned firms as set forth in the *Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity*. Applications that do not meet these requirements will not be considered by MBDA for funding.

About the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)

MBDA (mbda.gov), a bureau at the U.S. Department of Commerce, serves minority entrepreneurs across America who are building and growing enterprises. MBDA helps minority-owned firms become better equipped to create jobs, impact local economies and compete successfully in domestic and global marketplaces. With a nationwide network of business centers and strategic partners, MBDA assists minority entrepreneurs and business owners with consulting services, contract and financing opportunities, bonding and certification services, building business-to-business alliances and executive training.

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