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Minority Business Development Agency Awards \$5.1 million in Grants

The U.S. Department of Commerce’s Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) awarded \$5.1 million in grants to 11 organizations under three Agency initiatives—the Entrepreneurship Education for Formerly Incarcerated Persons, the MBDA Enterprising Women of Color Business Center, and the Inner-City Innovation Hub programs.

“U.S. Department of Commerce is pleased to support these three important MBDA initiatives as they encourage ingenuity within minority business communities,” said U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross. “These initiatives joining the national network of MBDA programs bolster innovative resources for minority entrepreneurs and business owners. The recipients of these grants will support minority enterprises and entrepreneurs from coast to coast, and I congratulate each recipient on their well-deserved award.”

“These programs offer another pathway to entrepreneurship, growth, and sustainability,” said David J. Byrd, MBDA National Director. “The Entrepreneurship Education for Formerly Incarcerated Persons is one way to address recidivism, providing tools and training to start a business. The Innovation Hub program will help initiate creative solutions that address challenges in the minority business community. The Enterprising Women of Color Business Centers will add fuel to the economic engine of growth already powered by women of color.”

The programs are two-year initiatives; the grant recipients include:

\$1.2 million awarded to the Entrepreneurship Education for Formerly Incarcerated Persons Program:

- **Columbia, SC:** DESA, Inc. will develop uniquely tailored programs to help resolve identity issues, prioritize expungement options, secure temporary employment, and incorporate one-on-one coaching for entrepreneurship opportunities.
- **Los Angeles, CA:** Defy Ventures will advance its *Entrepreneurship Pathway for Formerly Incarcerated Minorities* program, which offers executive mentorship, supportive peers, workshops, and training.

- **Baltimore, MD:** Morgan State University will implement a three-phase program to provide options for participants to focus on entrepreneurial training (launch), working with business advisors to address challenges (sustain), or working with seasoned entrepreneurs on future work plans (growth).
- **Birmingham, AL:** The Dannon Project will advance their FLEE program-Financial Literacy, Entrepreneurship and Education- to offer entrepreneurial programs and business coaching as a pathway to successful community reentry.

\$2.5 million awarded to the MBDA Enterprising Women of Color Business Center Program:

- **Washington, DC:** MP Services, LLC will provide unique, specialized training and guidance to support minority women owned businesses by providing entrepreneurship promotion, including educational workshops, network opportunities and training sessions.
- **Atlanta, GA:** Operation HOPE to focus on advancing women of color entrepreneurs in key growth industries including tech, exports, food service, ecommerce, transportation, and manufacturing.
- **Washington, DC:** Washington Area Community Investment Fund, Inc. will offer business development services, including access to its award-winning *Ascend Capital Accelerator* a female-focused accelerator that provides 10 to 12 weeks of asset-based development consisting of an interactive workshop series combined with small group matching and individualized support.
- **Metairie, LA:** Women's Business Enterprise Council South to establish cutting-edge trainings, access to capital assistance, networking, and procurement opportunities especially for minority women-owned business enterprises.
- **Honolulu, HI:** Young Women's Christian Association of Oahu will offer one-on-one business counseling, innovative workshops, and minority certification training offered in safe, nurturing, and empowering environments.

\$ 1.4 million awarded to the Inner-City Innovation Hub Program:

- **Atlanta, GA:** Georgia Tech Research Corporation will provide access to collaborative workspaces for minority business owners to convene and connect both to incubators, accelerators, and co-working spaces. This is in addition to university-focused technology, artificial intelligence, technology, research, mergers, and acquisitions.
- **Houston, TX:** William Marsh Rice University to develop the Aerospace Innovation Hub (ASCI-Hub) designed to engage, support, develop, and scale regional minority business enterprises that address needs, problems, and challenges in the aerospace industry.

Information about these grants are posted on the MBDA website at www.MBDA.gov/grantawards

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About the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)

MBDA is the only Federal agency dedicated to the growth and global competitiveness of U.S. minority-owned businesses. For more than 50 years, our programs and services have better equipped minority-owned firms to create jobs, build scale and capacity, increase revenues and expand regionally, nationally and internationally. For more information visit www.MBDA.gov.