

FY 2023 Notice of Funding Opportunity



MBDA Capital Readiness Program

**NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

<b>Federal Awarding Agency Name</b>	Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC)
<b>Funding Opportunity Title</b>	2023 MBDA Capital Readiness Program
<b>Announcement Type</b>	<b>Initial:</b> This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is publishing application submission requirements and application review procedures for MBDA’s Capital Readiness Program through which MBDA plans to award four-year cooperative agreements for activities designed to aid entrepreneurs in launching and developing businesses as authorized by § 3009(e)(2) of the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010, as amended by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) (codified at 12 U.S.C. § 5708(e)(2)).
<b>Funding Opportunity Number</b>	MBDA-OBD-2023-2007775
<b>Assistance Listing Number(s)</b>	11.034, CRP Program
<b>Key Dates and Application Submission Instructions</b>	<p><b>Email of Intent Deadline: Due January 31, 2023, by 5:00 p.m.</b> Eastern Standard Time. The Email of Intent is voluntary but strongly encouraged. Applicants who decide to submit Emails of Intent must email them to <a href="mailto:ssbci@mbda.gov">ssbci@mbda.gov</a> as explained in Section III.D of the NOFO.</p> <p><b>Application Deadline: Due March 10, 2023, by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.</b> Applications submitted after this deadline will not be reviewed or considered.</p> <p>All proposals must be received on or before <b>March 10, 2023</b>, at 11:59:59 pm Eastern Standard Time (EST). Applications may be submitted starting from the publication date of this NOFO up to the deadline above. <b>Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered for funding. Applications must be submitted electronically via grants.gov</b> (unless the below exception applies). <b>No application submitted to MBDA via email will be considered unless it meets the exception below and follows the requirements set forth below.</b> The electronic submission will receive a date and time stamp and will be processed after it is fully uploaded. Applicants should</p>

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	<p>anticipate receiving confirmation of successful submission within forty-eight (48) hours. It is imperative that applicants obtain this confirmation as proof of successful submission. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications as early as possible. <b>Waiting to apply until the end of the competition period puts an application at risk;</b> be sure to allow ample time.</p> <p>Applicants <b>must</b> diligently attempt to submit their applications via <a href="http://www.grants.gov">www.grants.gov</a>.</p> <p>Applicants that are <b>unable</b> to submit their application electronically on grants.gov may email their complete application to <b>CRPapplications@mbda.gov</b> by the submission deadline. <b>The only applicants who qualify to submit via this email submission method are those applicants who</b> (1) have not received a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov despite applying for a UEI <u>before</u> February 24, 2023 <b>or</b> (2) have experienced technical difficulties with the grants.gov system (including submission errors or registration errors beyond your control). As part of your emailed application, you will be required to demonstrate proof of the technical issues that prevented your organization from submitting an application via grants.gov. <b>Please see below for important requirements for the email submission method:</b></p> <p><b><u>For delays regarding receiving a UEI:</u> To qualify for the email application method on the basis of delays in receiving a UEI, you must have already applied for a UEI <u>before</u> February 24, 2023 <b>and</b> have contacted the SAM.gov help desk to receive an Electronic Verification System (EVS) ticket number (or other help desk tracking number or email correspondence) related to the processing of your request for a UEI. You <b>MUST</b> include your SAM.gov EVS ticket number in the body of the transmittal email with your application (or otherwise provide documentation equivalent to a help desk ticket or email correspondence) in order for your application to be reviewed. During the application review process, you must continue to diligently pursue your UEI registration. Applicants that fail to obtain a UEI and provide the UEI to MBDA by June 15, 2023 may not be eligible to receive an award under this Program.</b></p>
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	<p><b><u>For technical difficulties with grants.gov:</u> To qualify for the email application method on the basis of technical difficulties with the grants.gov system</b> (including submission errors or registration errors beyond your control), you <b>MUST</b> submit proof that you diligently attempted to submit your application (or register, if registration difficulties are the basis of your email application) with grants.gov and were prevented by system errors outside your control. Such proof could take the form of a help desk ticket from grants.gov, emails to the grants.gov help desk even if those emails did not yield a ticket number, or – in exceptional circumstances – screenshots of errors with an explanation of why you were not able to contact the help desk. <b>If you already have a UEI</b>, you must note your UEI in the body of your email. <b>If you do not already have a UEI</b>, you must provide an EVS ticket number or equivalent from SAM.gov, as outlined in the paragraph immediately above.</p> <p><b>Applicants are responsible for ensuring the completeness of their application.</b></p>
<p><b>Funding Opportunity Description</b></p>	<p>The MBDA Capital Readiness Program (Program) is designed to help close the entrepreneurship gap between socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDI) and non-SEDI. This notice requests applications from qualified organizations that have the expertise to provide technical assistance for entrepreneurs starting or scaling their businesses who are seeking various forms of capital. Specifically, MBDA expects this Program to serve SEDI-owned businesses that are applying, have previously applied, or plan to apply to an SSBCI capital program or other government program that supports small businesses.</p> <p>The competition seeks applicants that: (1) help SEDI entrepreneurs build capacity; (2) attract and provide access to capital opportunities; and (3) attract and provide access to networks. See Section 1.A of the NOFO. The proposed activities may <b>resemble the service models of incubators</b> (focusing on early-stage technical assistance for new entrepreneurs) <b>or accelerators</b> (providing emerging-stage technical assistance to businesses ready to expand or scale), <b>or provide a combination of both service models.</b> Note:</p>

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	<p>given the widespread need for support for early-stage services for entrepreneurs, MBDA encourages applicants to include services for new entrepreneurs and/or businesses in the early stages of the business lifecycle as part of its offerings. See Section I.A of the NOFO.</p> <p>Applicants must demonstrate a plan to drive SEDI participation in their program and target the needs of one or more subgroups within the definition of SEDI. Applicants who have not historically served SEDI populations must demonstrate a commitment from at least one SEDI-serving organization (such as a community-based organization or a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), Tribal College or University (TCU), or minority-serving institution (MSI)) to work with the applicant to increase the proposed activities' ability to effectively serve SEDI groups and effectively target SEDI needs. The applicant must explain the role the SEDI-serving organization(s) will play in the proposal. Such roles could include, but are not limited to, ensuring that the applicant's proposed activities and curricula address the needs of SEDI group(s), identifying potential barriers to SEDI participation in the applicant's current services and curricula, working with the applicant to design a plan to remediate those barriers, and amplifying and driving SEDI participation in the applicant's program. For each commitment by a SEDI-serving organization, the applicant must provide a letter of commitment from the SEDI-serving organization signed by an official authorized to bind that institution.</p>
<p><b>Cost Share and Match Requirements</b></p>	<p>Each eligible applicant shall provide a non-Federal match ranging from 10% to 25% depending on the award amount, as explained in Sections II.A and III.B of the NOFO).</p>
<p><b>Eligible Applicants</b></p>	<p>Eligible applicants are limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-profit organizations,</li> <li>• Private sector entities (defined as entities that are not public sector entities). This includes, for example, for-profit entities of any type, including sole-proprietorships, partnerships, limited liability companies, and corporations, but does not include public sector entities such as Federal, State, Local, or Tribal Governments, agencies, or any of their instrumentalities,</li> <li>• Institutions of higher education, and</li> <li>• A consortium of two or more of any of the above-</li> </ul>

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	<p style="text-align: center;">mentioned eligible applicants.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>See Section III.A, below. Requests from individuals will not be considered for funding.</p>
<p><b>Pre-Application Technical Assistance Webinars and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Document</b></p>	<p>MBDA will conduct a series of pre-application technical assistance webinars with focus areas noted below. These webinars are designed to help prospective applicants understand the Program so they can prepare competitive grant applications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webinar I – Competition overview, Program priorities and objectives, key dates, live Question and Answer session</li> <li>• Webinar II – Application review criteria, live Question and Answer session</li> <li>• Webinar III – Budget best practices and pitfalls to avoid, measuring success and performance, live Question and Answer session</li> </ul> <p><b>Dates and times for the webinars listed above and any additional webinars will be posted on the MBDA website.</b> Participants should register at least 24 hours in advance of the webinars. Please visit the MBDA website at <a href="http://www.mbda.gov">www.mbda.gov</a> to register and view recordings of the webinars, as well as other additional information.</p> <p>In addition, applicants may send questions to MBDA via email at <a href="mailto:ssbci@mbda.gov">ssbci@mbda.gov</a>. Questions received after February 25, 2023 may not be answered prior to the application deadline.</p> <p>MBDA will post responses to questions in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on its website to respond to questions. The FAQ will be updated regularly throughout the application period.</p>
<p><b>Award Notification</b></p>	<p>Successful applicants should expect to receive grant award notification approximately 90-120 days following the application deadline set forth in this NOFO.</p>

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<sup>1</sup> In a consortium application, there must be a designated lead applicant; the lead applicant would enter into the award agreement with MBDA and assume primary operational and financial responsibility for completing the project should an award be made.

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APPENDICES



## **I. Program Description**

### **A. Program Priorities and Objectives**

MBDA seeks to make lasting changes for America’s entrepreneurs through this MBDA Capital Readiness Program (hereinafter referred to as this “Program”) by seeking applicants who will help close the gaps in entrepreneurial opportunities for socially and economically disadvantaged individual (SEDI) entrepreneurs and help unleash a new era of business growth, hiring, and wealth.

The spirit of entrepreneurship, where every individual with the desire and drive to build a business could have the opportunity to do so, is an important American value. Unfortunately, historic, and systemic barriers continue to make success more difficult to reach for SEDI entrepreneurs. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted SEDI entrepreneurs and their businesses.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 re-authorized the Department of Treasury’s State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) program to help revive entrepreneurship in America after the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic. SSBCI provides a combined \$10 billion to empower small businesses to access capital. SSBCI provides jurisdictions (states, the District of Columbia, territories, and Tribal governments) funding for: (1) credit and investment programs for existing small businesses and start-ups and (2) technical assistance to small businesses applying for SSBCI funding and other government small business programs. This \$93.5 million Program funded by MBDA aims to fund applicants who provide SEDI entrepreneurs with the resources and technical assistance necessary to launch and scale investable businesses that may successfully access capital through SSBCI, other government programs, or other sources of capital. MBDA expects participants in technical assistance funded by this Program to be SEDI-owned businesses<sup>2</sup> that are applying, have previously applied, or plan to apply to an SSBCI capital program or other government program that supports small businesses.

**For this Program, “Capital” is defined as equity investments, debt, or grants.**

**For this Program, a SEDI-owned firm is:**

a) a business that is owned and controlled by individuals or whose current majority founders are individuals who have had their access to credit on reasonable terms diminished compared to others in comparable economic circumstances, due to their:

- (1) membership in a group that has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society;
- (2) gender;
- (3) veteran status;
- (4) limited English proficiency;

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<sup>2</sup> As appropriate, this NOFO also refers to individuals and entrepreneurs who participate in technical assistance on behalf of SEDI-owned businesses.

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- (5) disability;
- (6) long-term residence in an environment isolated from the mainstream of American society;
- (7) membership in a federally or state-recognized Indian Tribe;
- (8) long-term residence in a rural community;
- (9) residence in a U.S. territory;
- (10) residence in a community undergoing economic transitions (including communities impacted by the shift towards a net-zero economy or deindustrialization); or
- (11) membership in an underserved community.<sup>3</sup>

b) a business enterprise that certifies that it is owned and controlled by individuals whose residences are in Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) Investment Areas, as defined in 12 C.F.R. § 1805.201(b)(3)(ii);

c) a business enterprise that certifies that it will build, open, or operate a location in a CDFI Investment Area, as defined in 12 C.F.R. § 1805.201(b)(3)(ii); or

d) a business enterprise that certifies that it is located in a CDFI Investment Area, as defined in 12 C.F.R. § 1805.201(b)(3)(ii).

Applicants may target their proposal to the needs of one or more specific groups within the SEDI definition (hereinafter referred to as “SEDI groups”).

The Program will fund and build a geographically dispersed network of MBDA Capital Readiness technical assistance providers that help SEDI entrepreneurs launch or scale existing businesses and to access SSBCI Capital, participate in other governmental programs that support small businesses, and secure other forms of Capital.

**Target Business Types.** MBDA expects projects funded under this Program to serve entrepreneurs or businesses that have applied, are applying, or plan to apply to SSBCI or other government programs that support small businesses. Projects should support those entrepreneurs or businesses in launching and/or growing investable and scalable businesses with the goal of raising Capital, selling the business or filing for an initial public offering.

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<sup>3</sup> Underserved communities are populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life because of, for example: race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, residence in a rural community; and persistent poverty. See 31 C.F.R. 35.27(g)(11)(ii). “Underserved communities” includes Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. (See 31 C.F.R. 35.27(g)(11)(ii)).

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Proposals must demonstrate how the applicant provides one or both of the following services:

1. **Early-Stage Technical Assistance/Incubators** – These services help startups and early-stage entrepreneurs launch their businesses, products, or services. Services may include early-stage development, minimum viable product development, product validation, business advisory, matchmaking with mentors, peer support, subject matter expertise, workforce development and focusing on early-stage Capital solutions. Note: MBDA strongly encourages applicants to include technical assistance for new entrepreneurs and/or businesses in the early stages of the business lifecycle as part of its offerings.
2. **Emerging-Business Technical Assistance/Accelerators** – These services are designed for emerging businesses that have moved beyond the earliest stages of getting established and need more sophisticated guidance and peer support to scale up the business with a view toward equity fundraising, selling the business, or filing for an initial public offering. Services may include advisory guidance around growth and expansion, exit strategies, exploring new markets, providing a network of specialized mentors, vendors and peer support, industry-specific curriculum, workforce development and preparing companies for institutional level due diligence, pitches for seed/accelerating investors or the sale of the company.

**Proposals must design and offer activities or services that address each of the three core Program Pillars described below:**

1. **Capacity Building:** Proposals must demonstrate how the applicant will offer technical assistance services and curricula to assist SEDI entrepreneurs with launching and developing scalable and investable businesses. Examples of eligible capacity-building activities include, but are not limited to, management training, marketing training, media/social media training, financial literacy, financial planning, accounting, legal assistance, startup bootcamps, personal development modules, workforce development, empowerment workshops, pre-accelerator workshops, practice pitches and subject matter expertise modules, increasing awareness of basic credit practices and credit requirements, increasing awareness of capital raising options under Federal securities laws, and assisting in the development of business plans, financial packages, and credit applications. Applicants should be aware as they develop their proposals that MBDA anticipates facilitating coordination between awardees and other Federal agency programs and networks to supplement awardees' existing networks of subject matter experts, such as collaborating with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) on intellectual property modules and collaborating with the International Trade Administration (ITA) to provide international trade technical assistance, such as exploring exporting opportunities.
2. **Access to Capital:** Proposals must demonstrate how the applicant will provide technical assistance to SEDI entrepreneurs to apply for state SSBCI programs and/or other similar federal, state, or local government programs that promote American

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entrepreneurship and democratize access to startup capital across the country. Examples of eligible activities that could be provided include, but are not limited to, assisting entrepreneurs with identifying government capital programs, assisting entrepreneurs with navigating government capital programs, technical assistance with applications to programs, facilitating investor meetings, pitches, demo days, crowdfunding, providing workshops or webinars to enhance the knowledge of the various types of Capital, investor speed dating, and other capital introduction events or events that successfully attract Capital into the community the applicant serves.

**3. Access to Networks:** Proposals must demonstrate how the applicant will provide resources and programs that help connect SEDI entrepreneurs to a larger community of business mentors, coaches, service providers, subject matter experts and peers who understand and address SEDI-specific challenges. Some examples of eligible activities include, but are not limited to, those types of events that facilitate the formation of professional relationships, such as strategic alliances, mentorship relationships, peer support, working to attract and train a qualified workforce, creating an advisory board, cultivating stakeholders, corporate partnerships, securing vendors, advisors and service providers, matchmaking events, helping SEDI entrepreneurs conduct resource and asset mapping across the region to catalog investor networks, and increasing SEDI participation in public and private large-scale investment industries such as affordable housing development, and climate related technologies or services, two of the Administration’s priorities.

**Competitive applications will:**

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the business environment, Capital landscape, and government program opportunities in the identified geographic area, industry, and/or for the SEDI entrepreneurs that the proposal proposes to serve. This includes a demonstrated familiarity and understanding in state SSBCI programs or other government programs that support small businesses.
- Clearly identify SEDI entrepreneurs’ needs or barriers in launching or scaling businesses, accessing Capital and accessing networks in a defined geographic area, industry, and/or market segment.
- Clearly delineate strategies to provide effective tailored technical assistance to overcome barriers that inhibit access to Capital and access to networks for SEDI-owned businesses and to leverage business ecosystems to stimulate commercialization. Proposed strategies and solutions to the above-identified needs must align with and address all three Program Pillars (capacity building, access to Capital, and access to networks). Proposals should provide evidence illustrating how funds received through this competition will not only help

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launch new businesses and/or scale existing businesses that produce good jobs,<sup>4</sup> but also promote a region's entrepreneurial ecosystem or promote more SEDI entrepreneur participation in traditionally non-SEDI industries. **MBDA seeks to fund holistic programs for entrepreneurs, not one-off services. Activities and services that are provided as part of a multiple week curriculum seeking to graduate participants will be viewed as more competitive.**

- Demonstrate a successful track record in working with one or more SEDI groups *or* (for applicants who have not historically served SEDI groups) demonstrate commitments from organizations with track records in working with one or more SEDI groups, such as community-based organizations and HBCUs, TCUs, or MSIs. **The proposal must identify one or more SEDI group's needs it proposes to target.** See Section IV.B.2.d.ii for more information about alliances and commitments.
- Demonstrate a successful track record in working with early-stage businesses or working with emerging businesses that are poised to raise Capital, that have successfully raised Capital, or that have exited via a sale. **The proposal must identify where in the business lifecycle its target participants are – i.e., whether the proposal proposes to serve mostly early-stage businesses, emerging businesses, or a mix of both.** The proposal should note the industry(ies)/sector(s)/business stage(s) that they serve and their track record in serving those entrepreneurs. See Section IV.B.2.d.iii for more information.
- Demonstrate an effective network of contacts in the investment ecosystem that the applicant and/or strategic alliances can leverage to provide program participants with capital raising opportunities.
- Propose outreach strategies to maximize participation of SEDI entrepreneurs and increase the likelihood of success in achieving performance goals.
- Provide a non-Federal match of 10% to 25% of the total requested award amount (see Sections II.A and III.B, below).

Awardees may provide proposed services in-person, virtually, or through a combination of in-person and virtual services. Awards may fund operational and programmatic costs related to developing and supporting local, statewide, or regional (multi-state) initiatives. However, an applicant proposing to serve SEDI entrepreneurs significantly outside its local geographic area must clearly demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the business ecosystem it hopes to serve, its challenges, and opportunities, and provide an effective outreach plan to reach and serve SEDI entrepreneurs in that area, industry, or market segment.

Eligible applicants may request up to \$750,000 in the first year and a maximum of \$3,000,000 over a four-year period of performance. See Sections II.A and III.B, below.

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/goodjobs/Good-Jobs-Summit-Principles-Factsheet.pdf>.

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**B. Performance Measures and Goals**

The Program is a performance-based initiative that uses a range of output and outcome measures. Applicants should develop workplans that allow them to achieve and report on the required annual goals and measures. Achieving and reporting on performance goals is a requirement of the award.

The following are the six (6) required measures that applicants must report on under the Program (See Appendix B for the definitions of each performance measures and how goals must be set):

- Number of SEDI entrepreneurs enrolled in the project
- Number of SEDI entrepreneurs that graduate from the project
- Number of networking events held
- Number of SEDI entrepreneur or SEDI-owned business pitches to Capital provider(s)
- Number of SEDI-owned businesses formed or scaled
- Total amount of Capital raised (equity investments, debt, and grants)

Applicants must also propose and define at least one additional performance measure (“Other Performance Measure”) that best reflects project scope of work. This Other Performance Measure is subject to MBDA approval (see Appendix B).

**C. Statutory Authority**

The statutory authority for the MBDA Capital Readiness Program is § 3009(e)(2) of the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010, as amended by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) (codified at 12 U.S.C. § 5708(e)(2)). MBDA’s programmatic authority is 15 USC §§ 9501-9598.

**II. Award Information**

**A. Funding Availability**

In fiscal year (FY) 2023, MBDA expects to obligate approximately \$93.5 million for financial assistance awards made under this NOFO for the selected proposals; the financial assistance awards will have a four-year period of performance. MBDA anticipates making up to 46 awards under this NOFO. MBDA expects to obligate the full amount of the award in year one, and a recipient is expected to budget and expend from approximately \$500,000 to \$750,000 for each year of the four-year award, depending on the total award amount. Applicants should request a total award value in accordance with the below three tiers. Funding for years 2-4 will be

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disbursed to each recipient contingent upon recipient’s performance, including securing the required matching funds.

The total amount of non-Federal cost share an applicant is required to provide (see Section III.B, below) is based on the amount of Federal funding the applicant requests in accordance with the chart below. Subject to the availability of funding and based on applications received, MBDA expects to award total funding using the following chart as a guide.

Tier Level	Yearly Budget Amount	Required Non-Federal Share	Estimated Total Federal Funding (Over Four Years)	Estimated Total Non-Federal Share (Over Four Years)
Tier 1	Up to \$500,000	10%	Up to \$2,000,000	Up to \$200,000
Tier 2	From \$500,001 to \$625,000	15%	From \$2,000,001 to \$2,500,000	From \$300,001 to \$375,000
Tier 3	From \$625,001 to \$750,000	25%	From \$2,500,001 to \$3,000,000	From \$625,001 to \$750,000

Receipt of funding is contingent upon the availability of appropriated funds, satisfactory performance, and continued relevance to program objectives and will be at the sole discretion of MBDA. In addition, MBDA may terminate an award and decline to disburse funds for future years for failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the award. Publication of this NOFO does not obligate MBDA to award any specific cooperative agreement or to obligate all or any part of available funds.

**B. Project/Award Period**

Subject to availability of funding, MBDA expects to issue awards for a total term of four years from July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2027. The initial budget year will be 12 months. Subsequent budget years will be for 12-month terms, as outlined below.

Year	Fiscal Year	Months	Budget Year	
Year 1	FY23	12 months	July 1, 2023	June 30, 2024
Year 2	FY24	12 months	July 1, 2024	June 30, 2025
Year 3	FY25	12 months	July 1, 2025	June 30, 2026
Year 4	FY26	12 months	July 1, 2026	June 30, 2027

**C. Type of Funding Instrument**

Funding will be made through a cooperative agreement. After the award is made, MBDA will be substantially involved in the activities of this Program, including but not limited to:

- Providing training relating to the purpose of this Program, eligible activities, and program performance goals.

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- Requiring recipients to participate in a pre-implementation conference with MBDA to review the proposed technical assistance, services, and performance goals that the recipient will provide and measure.
- Providing necessary guidance and facilitating collaborations with other MBDA programs and initiatives, jurisdictions receiving SSBCI funds from the U.S. Department of Treasury, and Federal agencies other than MBDA, as appropriate.
- Monitoring activities carried out by the awardee, including by soliciting feedback from enrolled SEDI businesses.
- Conducting periodic Program evaluation and providing findings for improvement.
- Establishing and enforcing administrative, communications, and reporting requirements for each awardee.
- Providing access to and training for a performance management reporting system.

### **III. Eligibility Information**

#### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Eligible applicants are limited to:

- Non-profit organizations,
- Private sector entities (defined as entities that are not public sector entities). This includes, for example, for-profit entities of any type, including sole-proprietorships, partnerships, limited liability companies, and corporations, but does not include public sector entities, such as Federal, State, Local, or Tribal Governments, agencies, or any of their instrumentalities,
- Institutions of higher education, and
- A consortium of two or more of any of the above-mentioned eligible applicants. In a consortium application, there must be a designated lead applicant; the lead applicant would enter into the award agreement with MBDA and assume primary operational and financial responsibility for completing the project should an award be made.

MBDA is not authorized to provide cooperative agreements to individuals under this NOFO, and such requests will not be considered for funding.

#### **B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement**

A non-Federal cost share of the Federal funding is required for each budget year based on the Tier Structure shown in Section II.A. The range of the required cost share is 10% - 25% depending on the tier of the award amount request (see Section II.A, above). All cost sharing or matching must be consistent with the requirements of 2 CFR [200.306](#). Awardees may meet the non-Federal matching requirement by using (i) cash or in-kind contributions, without regard to whether the contribution is made by a third party if the contributions meet the requirements in 2 CFR 200.306(b)(1)-(7); and (ii) Federal funds received from other Federal programs only if



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those programs allow funding to be used for cost sharing purposes. If contributions include Federal funds received from other Federal programs, the applicant must attest that such program funding may be used for cost sharing purposes.

In-kind contributions must be documented and must be directed towards eligible project costs and meet applicable Federal cost principles and other requirements of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at [2 CFR Part 200](#).

Revenue may be, but is not required to be, generated from fees for service, client fees, membership fees, or other appropriate fees associated with services or activities funded through this Program as long as they are approved by MBDA. Any income generated may be used towards the matching requirement unless the matching requirement is met from other cash or in-kind sources. Any income generated in excess of the matching requirement must be used to carry out the activities of the program authorized by the award ([2 C.F.R. 200.307\(e\)\(2\)](#)). Awardees cannot charge fees so high that Program-funded services and activities are not accessible to a broad range of SEDI entrepreneurs and SEDI-owned businesses.

MBDA may determine, based upon a demonstration by the applicant of substantial need, that the applicant shall not be required to provide the full match with respect to the funding to be provided. To qualify for a waiver, an applicant must submit a request with the application, including a justification for the waiver, supporting documentation, and the amount being sought.

**C. Other Criteria That May Affect Eligibility**

None.

**D. Email of Intent Process**

MBDA strongly encourages applicants who intend to apply for funding under this Program to submit an Email of Intent to MBDA for this competition (see below for sample language). The Email of Intent can – but is not required to – follow the below language:

I am writing to express [ORGANIZATION NAME]'s intent to apply to the MBDA CAPITAL READINESS PROGRAM competition. [ORGANIZATION NAME] is located in [GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION].

Please note that submission of an Email of Intent is completely voluntary, does not constitute an agreement of funding or obligate MBDA to award any specific cooperative agreement or to obligate all or any part of available funds. Similarly, submission of an Email of Intent does not obligate potential applicants to submit a full proposal nor is it a pre-requisite for submitting a full proposal. The information contained in the Email of Intent also does not limit the geographic location or target beneficiaries the applicant may choose to include in its application. Emails of Intent simply provide information to help MBDA prepare for the application review process.

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If an applicant chooses to submit an Email of Intent, **it must be emailed to [ssbci@mbda.gov](mailto:ssbci@mbda.gov) by January 31, 2023.**

The applicant will receive an acknowledgment of receipt by email.

**IV. Application and Submission Information**

**A. Address to Request Application Package**

All application materials and forms are available at the Grants.gov website (<http://www.grants.gov>). Helpful competition materials such as FAQs will be made available on the MBDA website ([www.mbda.gov](http://www.mbda.gov)).

**B. Content and Form of Application**

Applications for the Program must be complete and follow the format described in this NOFO. A complete application packet consists of the following forms and required submissions described below. Applications that fail to include all the necessary elements may not be reviewed or considered and may be disqualified.

Required Application Content		
1	<b>Project Abstract</b>	One (1) page limit
2	<b>Project Narrative</b>	Twenty (20) page limit
3	<b>Supporting Documents</b> (i.e., letters of commitment, resumes)	
4	<b>Standard Forms</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance)</li> <li>• SF-424A (Budget Information Non-Construction Programs)</li> <li>• SF-424B (Assurances for Non-Construction Programs)</li> <li>• CD-511 (Certification Regarding Lobbying)</li> <li>• SF-LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities)</li> </ul>	
5	<b>Budget Narrative</b>	
6	<b>Letters of Commitment</b> (from applicants who are working with other organizations with strong track records of working with SEDI)	
7	<b>Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) Agreement Documentation</b> (if applicable)	

**1. Project Abstract (One (1) page limit)**

At a minimum, the project abstract page must provide the applicant’s name, address, telephone number, email address, date of submission, brief project description, brief description of project goals, and the Funding Opportunity Number. Applicants should also provide the following additional information: the project title, total budget, start and end dates, and the names, affiliations, complete mailing addresses, email addresses, and telephone numbers of all key person(s) who will lead the project the proposal. See Appendix A for a template.

**2. Project Narrative (Twenty (20) page limit)**

All applications must contain a detailed project narrative with defined sections as described below. All pages of the application must be consecutively numbered. Material beyond 20 pages may not be read or considered. Applicants are encouraged to provide a clear and concise narrative that includes a compelling justification for the project and articulates the needs of the geographic area, industry, and/or market segment, and which SEDI entrepreneur needs (whether specific to SEDI sub-groups or more applicable to the broad range of SEDI) the applicant proposes to meet, which eligible services and activities the applicant proposes to use to address each of the core Program Pillars as explained in Section I.A. of this NOFO, and the expected output(s) and outcome(s) that will result from the proposed solution.

- a. **Project Description:** The applicant should fully describe and explain what is being proposed.
  - i. **Executive Summary:** Provide an executive summary of the program of no more than 250 words that includes a program title, the service delivery model (i.e., early-stage technical assistance/incubator-type services and/or emerging-company/accelerator-type services), and the project’s proposed solution. If your application is selected for funding, MBDA may publish this executive summary, or portions of it, on its or other relevant websites and via social media.
  
- b. **Location, Industry, and/or Market Segment:** Indicate the specific geographic service area and region where project activities will be implemented and provide a clearly defined explanation of the area’s demographics, assets and needs, including the community and business ecosystem assets for SEDI. If the proposal seeks to focus instead on a particular industry or market segment that spans multiple geographic service areas, the proposal must clearly demonstrate a plan to effectively service multiple geographic areas. The location and geographic area should directly correspond to Questions 14 and 16 on the SF-424.
  
- c. **Target Participants:** Clearly identify the target participants, including what SEDI group(s), industry or market segment focus, maturity of entrepreneur/businesses served and method of technical assistance delivery.
  1. **SEDI group(s):** If the proposal plans to target the needs of specific SEDI groups, indicate which group(s) and why the location, needs, and proposed solutions will meet the needs of those group(s).  
*Note:* while applicants may choose to design programming to address the *needs* of particular SEDI groups, service delivery must be in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d to 2000d-7, and its implementing regulations, 28 C.F.R. Part 42, Subpart C; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794.
  2. **Industry/Market Segment Focus:** If the proposal plans to target a specific industry or market segment, indicate which industry(ies)

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or market segment(s) and why the particular focus, needs and proposed solutions will meet the need of the focus.

3. **Maturity of Business:** Specify whether the target participants will be early-stage entrepreneurs, growth-stage businesses, or both.
  4. **Delivery Method:** Specify if the technical assistance will be delivered virtually, in-person, or a hybrid of both.
- d. **Project Implementation Timeline:** Provide a timeline over the period of performance (four years) with progressive annual milestones demonstrating how the applicant will accomplish the project. Include a detailed plan for the first 120 days describing the program ramp-up activities.
- e. **Project Activities, Goals, and Objectives:** The applicant must:
- i. Provide the proposed project goals in the categories that will be tracked as performance metrics in Appendix B:
    - Number of SEDI entrepreneurs enrolled in the project
    - Number of SEDI entrepreneurs that graduate from the project's curriculum or module(s)
    - Number of SEDI networking events held
    - Number of SEDI entrepreneur or SEDI-owned business pitches to Capital provider(s)
    - Number of SEDI-owned businesses formed or scaled
    - Total amount of Capital raised (equity investments, debt, and grants)

In addition to the required metrics, applicants should propose at least one additional performance metric that is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound, and tied to the NOFO's program objectives and priorities (see Section I.A).

For all performance metrics, Applicants should include a description of the methodology or evidence and key assumptions that were used to construct and propose the goals.

- ii. Describe in detail the activities and services it will undertake to address each of the three Program Pillars. Activities and services that are provided as part of a multiple week curriculum seeking to graduate participants will be viewed as more competitive. Note to applicants: be specific and thorough and discuss each pillar separately:
  - a. Capacity-Building,
  - b. Access to Capital, and
  - c. Access to Networks
- iii. Describe in detail what economic and investment opportunities in the geographic service area, industry or market segment are available and

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- how the project plans to use those opportunities to make substantial progress toward achieving the Program objectives.
- iv. Describe in detail the specific outreach strategies the applicant and/or its partners will use to reach SEDI-owned businesses, recruit SEDI, and expand visibility of the services offered by the proposed project.
  - v. Describe in detail how the project is aligned with the needs of the target participants and whether those participants are ready to engage with the project. Be specific in how the project will engage with one or more SEDI groups to help them start or grow viable businesses and build relationships with other entities in the entrepreneurship community.
- f. **Networks and Collaboration with the Capital Ecosystem:** A successful applicant should be able to leverage its contacts in the Capital ecosystem to provide program participants with capital raising opportunities. The applicant should present information that describes its networks in the target geographic region, industry, and/or market segment.
- i. The application should include a detailed plan as to how the applicant will collaborate or connect with SSBCI Capital Program participating jurisdiction(s)<sup>5</sup> and/or other government programs supporting small businesses and build a referral system for program participants. If the applicant provides information regarding collaboration with or referral to specific SSBCI-approved jurisdictions or associated entities, the applicant must detail who the entity is and provide a source demonstrating SSBCI approval (e.g., link to federal, state, or local government website). If the applicant provides information regarding collaboration with or referral to other specific government programs supporting small businesses, the applicant must detail who the entity is and what the program does. A reference to collaboration with or referral to specific entities does not preclude awardees from engaging with other entities in the future, provided that the awardee can provide to MBDA similar assurance of the SSBCI approval or nature of similar programing. Rather, this is intended to demonstrate the applicant's knowledge of the ecosystem and plans for connecting with existing programs while recognizing that new programs may come into existence after the time of application and during the life of the Program.
- g. **Applicant Capability:** The applicant must present information demonstrating its

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<sup>5</sup> For lists of jurisdictions that have proposed SSBCI capital programs, see [https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/256/List\\_Proposed\\_Programs\\_Contacts.pdf](https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/256/List_Proposed_Programs_Contacts.pdf); <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/Tribal-Government-Capital-Program-Application-Submissions.pdf>. Note: While MBDA provides these links for applicants' reference, MBDA encourages applicants to seek the most up-to-date information published by Treasury on proposed and approved SSBCI programs.

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experience and qualifications and how it is uniquely positioned to leverage national or regional assets to execute the proposed project successfully. The application should include the following information:

- i. **Applicant Profile:** A summary of the applicant’s organization, its mission and programs, and organizational capability in helping businesses gain access to capital, networks, and capacity building. Please include any numerical data broken down on an annual basis up to the last five years to support the applicant’s track record and experience.
- ii. **Applicant Track Record working with SEDI entrepreneurs:** The applicant should describe its experience working with SEDI entrepreneurs. For the purposes of demonstrating a successful track record in this subsection, the applicant could include the applicant’s (or alliance organization’s) history working with the target program participants, quantitative and/or qualitative data about the applicant or alliance organization’s ability to build trust within the SEDI group(s) and drive participation in similar programs, or other indicia that the applicant or alliance organization are able to understand the needs of and reach SEDI groups. Please include any numerical data broken down on an annual basis up to the last five years to support the applicant’s track record and experience.
  1. **Applicants who have not historically served SEDI populations** must demonstrate a commitment from at least one SEDI-serving institution (such as a community-based organization or a HBCU, TCU, or MSI) to work with the applicant to increase the proposed activities’ ability to effectively serve SEDI groups and effectively target SEDI needs. The applicant must explain the role the SEDI-serving institution(s) will play in the proposal. Such roles could include, but are not limited to, ensuring that the applicant’s proposed activities and curricula address the needs of SEDI group(s), identifying potential barriers to SEDI participation in the applicant’s current services and curricula, working with the applicant to design a plan to remediate those barriers, and amplifying and driving SEDI participation in the applicant’s program. **For each commitment by a SEDI-serving organization, the applicant must provide a letter of commitment from the SEDI-serving institution signed by an official authorized to commit that institution.** Letters with more detail about the institution’s willingness and ability to provide support to the applicant will be viewed as more competitive.
- iii. **Applicant Background working with Businesses and/or Entrepreneurs:** An overview that emphasizes the applicant’s knowledge of strategies and the extent to which it has (1) worked with

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early-stage businesses, (2) helped emerging businesses evolve and grow, including by raising capital or facilitating a sale, or (3) both. Please include any numerical data broken down on an annual basis over the last five years to support the applicant's track record and experience.

- iv. **Organizational Structure, Biographies or Resumes for Key Personnel:** A chart showing the applicant's organizational structure, including a functional statement noting the duties and/or responsibilities of all units that will comprise the organization during the period for which the proposal applies. Applicants should clearly describe the organizational structure and financial operations of the organization. The applicant must submit a bio or resume of the applicant's key leader(s), for example President/CEO to oversee the success of the proposed project, as well as for the key project personnel who will lead the project. If the applicant is relying upon an alliance with a SEDI-serving organization, the applicant should clearly describe the organizational structure of that SEDI-serving organization and bios or resumes of any key personnel from the SEDI-serving organization that will collaborate with the applicant.
- v. **Disclosure of Pending or Completed Investigations, Lawsuits, or Findings:** For the time period covering January 1, 2018 through the date of submission of its application under this Program on grants.gov, the applicant must disclose all of the following actions related to the following subject matter: fraud, embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, tax evasion, violating Federal or state criminal laws, receiving stolen property, predatory lending, education fraud, or deceptive or questionable marketing or business practices:
1. Pending investigations into its operations or its leadership by any Governmental Body.<sup>6</sup>
  2. Any official findings (including but not limited to adverse findings) pursuant to any investigation into its operations or its leadership by Governmental Body.
  3. All pending lawsuits filed in federal or state court against the applicant or any member of the applicant's Leadership Team.<sup>7</sup>
  4. Any findings (including but not limited to adverse findings) of a court of law in response to a lawsuit filed in any federal or state court against the applicant or any member of the applicant's Leadership Team.

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<sup>6</sup> "Government Body" means any agency, bureau, commission, department, central bank, governmental official, subdivision, court, judicial tribunal, board or other instrumentality of any administrative, judicial, legislative, executive, regulatory, police or taxing authority of any government, with regulatory or judicial authority, whether supranational, national, Federal, state, regional, provincial, local, domestic or foreign, or any self-regulatory organization.

<sup>7</sup> "Leadership Team" means a person exercising decision-making authority for the entity (including Chief Executive Officers, Chief Financial Officers, Chief Operating Officers, Executive Directors, or equivalents of any of the aforementioned position titles), and persons who will direct funds on behalf the project.

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Applicants must also state whether any member of the applicant's Leadership Team has ever been convicted of fraud, embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, tax evasion, or a crime of dishonesty. Successful applicants may be required to certify the accuracy of any or all of the above disclosures and provide updates to those disclosures as a condition of funding. If applicants have no information to report under this subsection, simply include a statement to that effect.

- h. **Sustainability**: The applicant should describe the lasting impact of the proposed solution and its long-term benefits. The application should discuss the applicant's concept for sustainability once the project ends. Some illustrative, non-exclusive, examples of lasting impacts on ecosystems might include building lasting curricula that might be shared with other early-stage technical assistance providers/incubators or emerging-business technical assistance providers/accelerators; establishing lasting relationships between capital sources that historically haven't served SEDI and community-based organizations that serve SEDI, local good job creation or other such impact.

### 3. Supporting Documents

If cited in the proposal, the applicant must provide the following additional documentation that supports the proposed project, including:

- Memoranda of Understanding or Memoranda of Agreement between project partners.
- Letters of Support, Letters of Commitment, or other evidence of existing strategic relationships, collaborations, or alliances. Letters of Support or Commitment should be signed by an individual authorized to commit the organization. Letters of Support or Commitment that provide detail about how the entity intends to support the applicant and/or engage with the project will be viewed as more competitive.
- Matching Share Commitment Plan (see section IV.B.4d, below).
- Resumes of the proposed project director and key project staff
- Data/literature cited in the Project Narrative.
- Letters of recommendation from entrepreneur(s), including SEDI entrepreneurs, who were served by the applicant, if available.

### 4. Standard Forms (SF), Budget Narrative and Matching Commitment

The applicant must provide the required Standard Forms, attachments, and budget information as described in the section below.

- a. **Standard Application Forms**. Please refer to the application package available through Grants.gov. Please review each form to determine which is required with the application. Each applicant may not be required to submit all forms listed, depending on the project type or the applicant type.
- i. **Signed SF-424**. The SF-424 must be signed by the authorized organization representative. Electronic signatures submitted through Grants.gov satisfy this requirement. **ONE SF-424 form will cover all**



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- budget years.** Please note that the authorized organization representative will be recognized as the main point of contact to receive official notifications on the application throughout the competition.
- ii. **SF-424A.** Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs. **Applicants must submit a SEPARATE 424A for EACH** budget year. In Section B of the form, include the federal fund amounts in column 1 and the non-federal matching share amounts in column 2. Federal and non-federal matching share funds must be separated out for each budget year. These should be clearly labeled. In Section C, include the breakdown of projected non-federal sources of match. In Section D, Forecasted Cash Needs, the total federal amount that can be expended should range from \$500,000 to \$750,000. The maximum drawdown amount may not exceed \$750,000 for each year of the four year award.
  - iii. **SF-424B.** Assurances for Non-Construction Programs. The SF-424B must be signed by the authorized organization representative.
  - iv. **Budget Narrative.** A detailed budget narrative must be completed and submitted for all non-construction applications. The Federal and non-federal share amounts must be separated out for each budget year.
  - v. **SF-LLL.** Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
  - vi. **Commerce Department (CD)-511.** Certification Regarding Lobbying.
- b. **Budget Narrative.** Applicants **MUST** provide a clear budget narrative that identifies and justifies how funds in each line item of the budget (e.g., staffing, work activities, materials and supplies, outreach, equipment, etc.) will be used to support the proposed project. The budget narrative should specifically address each budget line item (including both the Federal and matching non-Federal share). Please note that the budget narrative total should match exactly the total project costs listed in both the SF-424, Question 18, Line g (“TOTAL”) and the appropriate Federal and non-Federal total fields of the SF-424A.
- c. **Required Travel Item(s).** Travel expenses for all required travel items should include transportation, lodging, and per diem and must align with the current Federal travel guidelines, found at <https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/regulations/federal-travel-regulation>
- i. Applicants are required to budget for a 4-day trip for two staff persons (one of whom must be the project director) to attend MBDA’s National Capital Readiness Program Implementation Meeting in Washington, DC, during the first year of the program. The Implementation Meeting is a one-time event.

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ii. Applicants are required to budget for two additional trips for each year of the program for up to two staff persons (one of whom must be the project director):

- MBDA’s Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week, and
- MBDA’s National Training Conference.

Applicants should plan for each trip to be 4 days. The location of the events may vary. To estimate costs, please use Washington, DC as the location. Applicants may also budget for a program participant (SEDI entrepreneur) to travel to MED Week each year, subject to MBDA input and approval.

MBDA will notify applicants no later than two months in advance of each planned event whether in-person attendance is required or whether virtual attendance is permissible. If virtual attendance is permissible, applicants will be allowed to reallocate the associated travel budget items to other line items.

d. **Matching Share Commitment.** At the time of application, applicants must indicate their commitment to the non-federal cost share and submit a plan that demonstrates their ability to meet the required matching share over the course of the four-year program. This plan includes identifying all sources of funds, including but not limited to: current assets, prospective income streams (including but limited to program fees), third-party contributions (either cash or in-kind), etc. *Note:* If an applicant has requested a waiver, the applicant must also submit a plan to meet the matching share if they wish to be considered for funding in the event that waiver is not granted. As a condition of continued funding, awardees may be required to submit updated plans, commitment letters, or other documentation for matching share funds in future budget years. Failure to meet the required the non-federal cost match may result in termination of the award.

**5. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement Documentation (as applicable)**

Applicants requesting to use established indirect cost rate are required to submit a copy of their current and signed indirect cost rate agreement with the application package. If an applicant does not have a current indirect cost rate established by a cognizant Federal agency, provide a statement to this effect. If a successful applicant includes indirect costs in the budget and has not established an indirect cost rate with a cognizant Federal agency, the applicant will be required to obtain such a rate in accordance with Section B.06 of the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, dated November 12, 2020.

Alternatively, in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.414(f), a non-Federal entity that does not have a current negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs. Applicants proposing a 10 percent de minimis rate pursuant to [2 C.F.R. § 200.414\(f\)](#) should note this election as part of the budget and budget narrative portion of the application.

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Indirect costs proposed under the award must be clearly identified as a separate budget line-item.

**6. Format Requirements**

All pages should be single-spaced and should be composed in at least 11-point font with one-inch margins. The total proposal shall not exceed 30 pages, including the project abstract, project narrative, literature cited, budget narrative, project timeline, and organizational structure. The following items are **not** included in the 30-page limit:

- Resumes/bios of key personnel
- Required forms (i.e., Standard Forms 424, CD-511, etc.)
- Letters of support and/or matching funds letters of commitment
- Letters of recommendation from entrepreneurs served by the applicant

Failure to follow these requirements may result in the rejection of the application. Any PDF or other attachments that are included in an electronic application must meet the above format requirement when printed.

**C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)**

Each applicant (unless the applicant is eligible for an exception under 2 CFR § 25.110(b), (c), or (d)) is required to:

- **Register** in the System for Award Management (SAM), before applying.
- **Provide** a valid unique entity identifier in the application; and,
- **Continue** to maintain an active SAM registration with current information during the entire period that the applicant has an active Federal award or an application under consideration by MBDA (or any other Federal agency).

MBDA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time MBDA is ready to make the award, MBDA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

**D. Submission Dates and Times**

All proposals must be received on or before **March 10, 2023**, at 11:59:59 pm Eastern Standard Time (EST). Applications may be submitted starting from the publication date of this NOFO up to the deadline above. **Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered for funding. Applications must be submitted electronically via grants.gov** (unless the below exception applies). **No application submitted to MBDA via email will be considered unless it meets the exception below and follows the requirements set forth below.** The electronic submission will receive a date and time stamp and will be processed after it is fully uploaded. Applicants should anticipate receiving confirmation of successful submission within forty-eight (48) hours. It is imperative that applicants obtain this confirmation as proof of successful submission. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications as early as possible. **Waiting to apply until the end of the competition period puts an application at risk;** be sure to allow ample time.

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Applicants must diligently attempt to submit their applications via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

Applicants that are **unable** to submit their application electronically on grants.gov may email their complete application to **CRPapplications@mbda.gov** by the submission deadline. **The only applicants who qualify to submit via this email submission method are those applicants who** (1) have not received a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov despite applying for a UEI before February 24, 2023 **or** (2) have experienced technical difficulties with the grants.gov system (including submission errors or registration errors beyond your control). As part of your emailed application, you will be required to demonstrate proof of the technical issues that prevented your organization from submitting an application via grants.gov. **Please see below for important requirements for the email submission method:**

**For delays regarding receiving a UEI: To qualify for the email application method on the basis of delays in receiving a UEI, you must have already applied for a UEI before February 24, 2023 and have contacted the SAM.gov help desk to receive an Electronic Verification System (EVS) ticket number (or other help desk tracking number or email correspondence) related to the processing of your request for a UEI. You **MUST** include your SAM.gov EVS ticket number in the body of the transmittal email with your application (or otherwise provide documentation equivalent to a help desk ticket or email correspondence) in order for your application to be reviewed. During the application review process, you must continue to diligently pursue your UEI registration. Applicants that fail to obtain a UEI and provide the UEI to MBDA by June 15, 2023 may not be eligible to receive an award under this Program.**

**For technical difficulties with grants.gov: To qualify for the email application method on the basis of technical difficulties with the grants.gov system (including submission errors or registration errors beyond your control), you **MUST** submit proof that you diligently attempted to submit your application (or register, if registration difficulties are the basis of your email application) with grants.gov and were prevented by system errors outside your control. Such proof could take the form of a help desk ticket from grants.gov, emails to the grants.gov help desk even if those emails did not yield a ticket number, or – in exceptional circumstances – screenshots of errors with an explanation of why you were not able to contact the help desk. **If you already have a UEI, you must note your UEI in the body of your email. If you do not already have a UEI, you must provide an EVS ticket number or equivalent from SAM.gov, as outlined in the paragraph immediately above.****

**Applicants are responsible for ensuring the completeness of their application.**

**E. Intergovernmental Review**

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

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**F. Funding Restrictions**

The following activities and associated costs are not allowable under this Program. Such costs may not be charged to the Federal share or matching share of the award.

- **Construction:** Construction activities are not allowable under this program. For the purposes of an award made pursuant to this NOFO, construction includes any activity that disturbs the ground or modifies a structure.
- **Equity Investments & Loans:** The use of award funds for equity investments, loans, or grants to entrepreneurs or businesses is not allowable under this program. Thus, the cost of any equity investment, loan, or grant is not an allowable cost under an award. Neither Federal nor matching share funds may be invested in startups or other companies, whether through equity, debt, hybrid, or another mechanism. Similarly, services funded by Federal or matching share cannot be exchanged for equity or otherwise used as the basis for an equity stake in a company. However, an award recipient may make such investments with outside funds that are not Federal or matching share funds under the award

**G. Other Submission Requirements**

To apply through Grants.gov, an applicant must register for a Grants.gov user ID and password. Note that this process can take between three to five business days or as long as four weeks if all steps are not completed correctly. The most up-to-date instructions for application submission via Grants.gov can be found at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>. Applicants already registered with Grants.gov do not need to re-register; however, all registered organizations must keep their System for Award Management (SAM) registration up to date through sam.gov or their applications will not be accepted by Grants.gov.

**1. New Grants.gov Users**

New Grants.gov users should note that the registration process can be lengthy, requires interaction with multiple organizations not affiliated with MBDA, and requires confirmation at each step. Applicants should register as organizations, not individuals. The process requires the applicant to appoint one or more Authorized Organization Representatives (AOR). The AORs registered at Grants.gov are the only officials with the authority to submit applications for an applicant. An applicant may authorize multiple AORs for Grants.gov. Below are instructions for registering as an organization:

- **Obtain a UEI Number:** To obtain the required Unique Entity Identifier, please go to [SAM.gov | Entity Registrations](https://sam.gov) to register. All applicants must have a UEI to do business with the Federal government.
- **Register with SAM:** Access <https://www.sam.gov>. The applicant needs to identify the authorizing official of its organization and an Employer Identification Number (EIN) (7-10 business days).

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- Create Grants.gov Username and Password: Complete the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) profile and create a username and password. The applicant will need to use its organization's DUNS Number (same day).
- Authorize the AOR: Request approval, then the applicant's E-Biz POC must log in to Grants.gov to confirm the AOR (same day).
- Track AOR Status: Log in to Grants.gov and look at the Applicant welcome box for your status (same day).
- Download an application package: **Use Funding Opportunity Number MBDA-OBD-2023-2007775** and [Download a Grant Application Package](#) (same day).
- Complete your application package: Write your proposal and fill out ALL the required forms, fields, and certifications (allow 3 days).
- Submit your application package: Access your completed application package, ensure all the necessary information is entered, check the package for errors, then click the "Save & Submit" button on the cover page (3 days).
- Track my application package: Enter the tracking number you received after Step 8 and click the "Submit Tracking Numbers" button. Note, confirmation of successful submission may require 48 hours (allow 2 days).

## 2. Electronic Submission

The electronic submission date is the date that applications have been submitted electronically and received by Grants.gov. Proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) receives your application. You must save and print the proof of submission from [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov). If problems occur while using [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov), the applicant is advised to (i) print any error message received and (ii) call [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) at 1-800-518-4726 for immediate assistance.

The time it takes to completely upload an application will vary depending on several factors, including the size of the application, the speed of the applicant's Internet connection, and the time it takes Grants.gov to process the application. If Grants.gov rejects the application, the applicant must resubmit the entire application and receive a date and time stamp from Grants.gov. The Grants.gov time stamp will be considered the date and time of submission receipt. Before beginning to apply through Grants.gov, please review the application instructions posted at Grants.gov.

If you experience a grants.gov "systems issue" (technical problems or glitches with the grants.gov website) that you believe threatens your ability to complete a submission, you must (i)

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print any error message received and (ii) call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 for immediate assistance. Ensure that you obtain and document a case number regarding your communications with grants.gov. Please see above for the email submission method that you may use if you encounter technical issues with grants.gov. Please note in particular the requirement to provide documentation proving that you diligently attempted to submit your application via grants.gov.

**Important note:** Problems with an applicant organization’s computer system or equipment are not considered “systems issues.” Similarly, an applicant’s failure to: (i) complete the required registration, (ii) ensure that a registered AOR submits the application, or (iii) receive an email message from grants.gov are not considered systems issues. A grants.gov “systems issue” is an issue occurring in connection with the operations of grants.gov system, such as the temporary loss of the service by grants.gov due to unexpected volume of traffic or failure of information technology systems, both of which are highly unlikely.

Confirmation of successful submission requires 48 hours. Applicants are advised to review the Grants.gov tutorial to minimize risk of an unsuccessful submission. Please visit <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101/getting-started-checklist.html>.

## **V. Application Review Information**

Throughout the review and selection process, MBDA reserves the right to seek clarification and corrected or missing documents in writing from applicants whose applications are being reviewed. MBDA may additionally ask applicants to clarify application materials or modify budgets or other specifics necessary to comply with Federal requirements.

### **A. Evaluation Criteria**

Each application will be evaluated based on criteria included below. The number of points that can be earned for each category of criteria is listed below. A maximum total of 100 points may be earned for required criteria and up to an additional 10 bonus points may be earned points for MBDA strategic priority areas, for a maximum possible total of 110 points.

#### **1. Project Goals and Proposed Solution (40 points)**

This criterion considers the strength of the proposed activities under the three Program Pillars, the alignment of the proposal with the identified target participants’ (SEDI entrepreneurs) needs, and the strength of the proposal’s ability to drive SEDI participation in the project. Proposed goals should be specific, measurable, reasonable, and achievable during the grant period and beyond. Accordingly, the proposal will be assessed on:

- The proposal’s clear identification of target participants (i.e., one or more SEDI groups) *and* a demonstrated understanding of the barriers or gaps in capacity preventing the target participants from accessing capital. (5 points)
- The strength of the applicant’s proposed activities under the **Capacity Building pillar** of the Program (see Section I.A), including a clear statement backed by numerical data demonstrating how the applicant’s proposed activities will meet the needs of the target

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participants. This element includes the strength of the curriculum and MBDA’s goal to fund a comprehensive curriculum from which entrepreneurs can “graduate”, rather than one-off services. (10 points)

- The strength of the applicant’s proposed activities under the **Access to Capital pillar** of the Program (see Section I.A), including a clear statement backed by numerical data demonstrating how the applicant’s proposed activities meet the needs of the target participants. This includes the strength of the applicant’s understanding of the capital ecosystem in the geographic location, industry, or market segment and the strength of the proposal’s plan to collaborate and/or connect program participants with Treasury’s SSBCI or other similar governmental programs. (10 points)
- The strength of the applicant’s proposed activities under the **Access to Networks pillar** of the Program (see Section I.A), including a clear statement backed by numerical data demonstrating how the applicant’s proposed activities meet the needs of the target participants. This includes the strength of the applicant’s understanding of the business and professional networks in the geographic location, industry, or market segment and the strength of the proposal’s plan to connect Program participants to the network of professionals such as mentors, peers, subject matter experts, and service providers. (10 points)
- The strength of the applicant’s strategies to drive SEDI participation in the project, including a clear statement backed by numerical data demonstrating how the applicant’s proposed activities and outreach strategy maximize the number of SEDIs served. This element may include the strength of the proposed alliances (as illustrated through Letters of Commitment and/or memoranda of understanding) and the strength of the proposal’s plan for outreach. (5 points)

**2. Organizational Capacity (Resources and Assets) (40 points)**

This criterion assesses whether the applicant has the resources and capacity to meet the needs of the target participants, define the target geographic area, industry, or market segment to be served, understand the community and business ecosystem’s assets, challenges and needs, and demonstrate they can leverage the strengths of other organizations. The criterion further assesses if the organization has the financial and management capacity to execute the project successfully. Therefore, the application will be assessed on whether it includes:

- An explanation of why the applicant is positioned to serve target participants’ needs and to execute the proposed project successfully. (10 points)
- A clear explanation that demonstrates prior performance serving SEDI populations and driving SEDI participation in technical assistance programs. (10 points)
  - *Note:* If the applicant has not historically served SEDIs, an applicant can meet this criterion by establishing an alliance with one or more SEDI-serving institutions. To meet this criterion via alliances, the applicant must clearly describe the



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alliance organization’s prior performance in technical assistance programs serving SEDIs and how the alliance will enable the applicant to effectively serve SEDIs, including driving participation. The applicant must include one or more letters of commitment signed by the SEDI-serving institution. See Section IV.B.2.d.ii for more information.

- A clear explanation that demonstrates prior performance or organizational capacity providing technical assistance and/or capacity building to businesses and access capital and networks, including but not limited to assisting (1) early-stage businesses launch their business, product or service and/or (2) emerging-businesses that have moved beyond the earliest stages of getting established and need more sophisticated guidance and peer support to scale up the business with a view toward equity fundraising, selling the business, or filing for an initial public offering. Such demonstration includes, over the last five years, the organization’s capacity to provide **access to capital, access to networks, and capacity building**. (10 points)
- A detailed explanation of the organization’s operations and management strengths including the organizational structure that show its capacity to execute the proposed project successfully. To meet this sub-criterion, the applicant must also submit the resumes of the project director and key project staff who will deliver services. Applicants may also strengthen their proposals under criterion by providing a list of the applicant’s Board of Directors or other advisers that the applicant may draw on for operational or subject matter expertise. (10 points)

**3. Budget and Timeline (20 points)**

- The feasibility and strength of the budget narrative, particularly whether the budget narrative and staffing costs are reasonable and realistic for the proposed project. (10 points)
- The feasibility of the project’s proposed goals, particularly whether the proposal demonstrates that the goals and activities are ambitious, realistic, achievable, and reasonable given the amount of funding requested by the proposal. (10 points)

**Total Available Application Points                      100**

**4. Bonus Points for MBDA Strategic Priorities**

Under this NOFO, an applicant may be awarded a maximum of 10 bonus points for the following MBDA strategic priorities. An applicant may receive up to 5 points for each of the following categories. An applicant may receive points under multiple categories, but the total amount of bonus points an applicant receives will be capped at 10.

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- **Providing services in geographic areas that are rural in nature.** Applicants who clearly explain in their proposal their demonstrated ability and/or plan for serving rural communities as part of or in addition to their targeted SEDI groups can receive up to five bonus points. Note: this category of bonus points does not encourage or require an applicant to propose *exclusively* serving rural communities; rather, this bonus point category recognizes that there are additional challenges to reaching and serving rural communities, and reviewers may award up to five bonus points to proposals that demonstrate an ability and plan to serve rural communities in addition to other SEDI-owned businesses and/to entrepreneurs. The number of points awarded will depend on the clarity and feasibility of the narrative and supporting documentation (if any). For this competition, rural and rural area have the same meaning as [7 U.S.C. 1991\(a\)\(13\)](#).
- **Providing childcare as a support for SEDI entrepreneurs** – One of the largest barriers to female entrepreneurship, according to Forbes, especially for women of color is access to quality childcare.<sup>8</sup> Childcare is key to inclusive economic equity. Applicants who provide free or subsidized childcare to program participants as a current or planned part of their organizational operations may receive up to five bonus points. For example, to qualify for this category, a project could demonstrate a plan to provide on-site childcare via a supervised playroom to enable entrepreneurs to attend classes as part of the project’s curriculum. **Please note that Program funds cannot be used to fund childcare activities as part of the proposal or as an eligible activity.** This must be separate and apart from MBDA funding and the non-federal cost share. The number of points awarded will depend on the clarity and feasibility of the narrative and supporting documentation (if any).
- **Serving SEDI-owned businesses with a focus on market-driven solutions that provide greater resources to underserved communities, such as including affordable housing solutions, food security, or climate-related technology or services.** Applicants who clearly explain in their proposals their demonstrated ability to target or assist businesses that provide market-driven solutions to provide resources to underserved communities such as affordable housing solutions, food security, or climate-related technologies or services can receive up to five bonus points. The number of points awarded will depend on the clarity and feasibility of the narrative and supporting documentation (if any).
- **Serving SEDI-owned businesses with a focus on healthcare, biotechnology and biomanufacturing, asset management, artificial intelligence, information security, supply chain resiliency or management, semiconductors, cloud computing or another high growth critical emerging technology.** Applicants who clearly explain in their proposal their demonstrated ability and/or plan for assisting SEDI-owned businesses in these industries as part of or in addition to their targeted SEDI groups can receive up to

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<sup>8</sup> Forbeswoman: The Childcare Crisis Limits Women Entrepreneurs’ Potential. August 26, 2020

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five bonus points. The number of points awarded will depend on the clarity and feasibility of the narrative and supporting documentation (if any).

- **Supporting Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Related Industries.** Applicants who clearly explain their expertise in supporting IIJA or IRA-related businesses may receive up to five bonus points. Such industries would have a close nexus to infrastructure; construction; power infrastructure; climate related technologies or services; transportation; high-speed internet access; drinking and wastewater water; water storage, efficiency and recycling; purification of water and soil or other environmental remediation activity; and ancillary services that serve these industries. The number of points awarded will depend on the clarity and feasibility of the narrative and supporting documentation (if any).

**Total Available Bonus Points - up to a maximum of 10 points**

All applications must adhere to the submission guidelines provided in this section. Omissions may result in disqualification of the entire *application*. The following are items that must be included with an application and failure to submit them may result in disqualification:

- Project Narrative
- Budget Narrative
- Required Standard Forms (SF) and Attachments

All project proposals will be evaluated, and an applicant will be scored based on the level at which the proposal addresses the evaluation criteria above

**B. Review and Selection Process**

**1. Initial Screening (Technical Review)**

Prior to the formal review process, each application will receive an initial administrative screening to ensure that all required forms, signatures, and documents are present. An application may not be evaluated by the review panel if:

- a) The application is received after the closing date.
- b) The application package does not contain mandatory items (see Section IV. B).
- c) The project fails to address program objectives and priorities (see Section I).

MBDA, in its sole discretion, may continue review of applications with minor defects that may be easily rectified or cured.

**2. Merit Review**

Each responsive application will receive an independent, merit review by a panel (Merit Review Panel) qualified to evaluate the applications submitted based on the published evaluation criteria. The Merit Review Panel will consist of at least three (3) individuals, all of whom could be a combination of full-time Federal employees and/or non-Federal subject matter experts. Each reviewer on the Merit Review Panel shall evaluate and provide an individual score for each proposal based on the criteria set out in this Section (see Application Review Information, above) for a maximum of 110 points, including the Bonus Points. The Merit Review Panel may discuss the application(s) but will not provide a consensus on scores for each applicant.

MBDA, in its sole discretion, may use a statistical technique to normalize, aggregate, and group Merit Reviewers' quantitative evaluations (i.e., scores). Each application will receive a single score by averaging the scores of all reviewers for each application, taking into account statistical techniques described above, if applicable. During the review process, applicants may receive a written request from the MBDA program office to clarify items contained in the applicant's proposal. Only applications that receive an overall average of 65 points or more are deemed meritorious and will be considered for funding. Applications that receive fewer than 65 points will not be considered for funding.

**3. MBDA Selection Review Panel and Selection Factors**

Proposals that receive 65 or more points will be passed to the Selection Review Panel, composed of no more than 5 Federal employees, for consideration. The Selection Review Panel will recommend a final portfolio of proposals, from which the successful applications may be selected, and may take into consideration one or more of the following selection factors:

- The extent to which the application meets the overall objectives and priorities of the MBDA Capital Readiness Program as provided in Section I.A.
- Likelihood that the applicant will be able to assist SEDI-owned businesses with producing high-quality applications to state SSBCI programs or other similar government programs that support small businesses.
- Demonstrated ability to provide high quality technical assistance.
- The performance of the applicant under previous Federal financial assistance awards, as well as the performance of any third parties the applicant identifies who will carry out a substantial portion of the project.
- The availability of funds.
- The extent to which the application demonstrates an effective plan to ensure that SEDI entrepreneurs benefit from available resources.

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- The likelihood that the applicant and its proposed partners will be able to effectively engage with one or more SEDI groups.
- The likelihood that the proposal will benefit the SEDI business ecosystem in a lasting way (i.e., sustainability and lasting impact).
- Diversity of SEDI needs targeted - The extent to which the project supports MBDA's goal of balance in distribution of program funds within the overall portfolio of awards to serve a wide range of SEDI groups. Recognizing that the needs of various SEDI groups vary widely, applicants may design programs that target the needs specific SEDI sub-groups.
- The extent to which the project supports MBDA's goals of balance in distribution of program funds within the overall portfolio of awards, including balance in geographic locations, business sectors, and/or life cycles of businesses targeted. Note: given the widespread need for support for early-stage services for entrepreneurs, MBDA encourages applicants to include services for new entrepreneurs and/or businesses in the early stages of the business lifecycle as part of its offerings.
- The extent to which the proposal aligns with MBDA's mission.

In addition to considering the application and supporting documentation, the Selection Review Panel may rely upon publicly available information to inform its application of the selection factors. The Selection Review Panel will recommend a final portfolio of proposals for the Selecting Official.

The Under Secretary of Commerce for Minority Business Development, or his/her designee, is the Selecting Official and makes the final recommendation regarding the funding of applications under this NOFO. The Selecting Official retains discretion to select and recommend an application for funding that was not recommended by the selection review panel based on one or more of the selection factors enumerated above.

Prior to making a final recommendation for funding to the Grants Officer, MBDA may conduct negotiations with an applicant regarding the elements of the application and/or may request that the applicant provide written clarifications regarding its application.

There is no appeal process for denied applications.

### **C. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates**

The anticipated time for processing awards is approximately 120 days from the receipt of applications. MBDA anticipates that the awards under this NOFO will be made with a start date of July 1, 2023. Successful applicants may be eligible for pre-award costs (see 2 CFR § [200.458](#)).

## **VI. Award Administration Information**

### **A. Award Notices**

The notice of award (CD-450) is executed by the NOAA Grants Management Division and is the authorizing document. It is generally provided electronically via the Grants Online electronic grants management system (or its successor) to the Authorized Representative of the recipient organization. The Notice of Award will include the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions and any other required Specific Award Conditions. The Authorized Representative will receive instructions from MBDA on how to access the Grants Online system to accept the award.

MBDA will notify unsuccessful applicants, in writing, after final selections have been made and after all offers have been accepted. Those applications that are not ultimately selected for funding will be retained by MBDA for a period of three (3) years after which they will be destroyed.

### **B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

1. *Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements For Grants And Cooperative Agreements* – The *Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements*, published in the Federal Register on December 30, 2014, effective December 26, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at:  
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2014/12/30/2014-30297/departments-of-commerce-pre-award-notification-requirements-for-grants-and-cooperative-agreements>
2. Awards made under this NOFO are subject to the *Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions*. This document will be provided in the award package. This document can be found at:  
[https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%202012%20November%202020%20PDF\\_0.pdf](https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%202012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf). Successful applicants may also be required to agree to additional Specific Award Conditions as a condition of funding. These conditions will be provided in the award package.
3. *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements*: Through 2 CFR § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at [2 CFR Part 200](#), which apply to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>
4. *Review of Risk*: After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under [2 CFR 200.206](#). These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of

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performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency.

5. *U.S. Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General*: The U.S. Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General (OIG) seeks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department's programs, including deterring and detecting fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement. The OIG accomplishes this mission primarily through investigations, audits, and inspections of Department activities, including grants, cooperative agreements, loans, and contracts.

- a. Disclosures:

Recipients of financial assistance originating from the U.S. Department of Commerce, including MBDA, shall timely disclose, in writing, to the OIG and awarding agency, whenever, in connection with the award, performance, or closeout of this grant or sub-award thereunder, the recipient has credible evidence that a principal, employee, agent, or sub-recipient has committed:

- (i) A violation of federal criminal law involving fraud, conflict of interest, bribery, or gratuity violations found in Title 18 of the United States Code; or
- (ii) A violation of the civil False Claims Act (31 U.S.C. §§ 3729-3733).

- b. Reporting:

The OIG maintains a hotline to receive allegations of fraud, waste, or abuse. To report such allegations, please visit <https://www.oig.doc.gov/Pages/Hotline.aspx>. Upon request, the OIG will take appropriate measures to protect the identity of any individual who reports misconduct, as authorized by the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. Reports to the OIG may also be made anonymously.

- c. Whistleblower Protection:

Recipients, sub-recipients, and employees working on this grant award will be subject to the whistleblower rights and remedies established under 41 U.S.C. § 4712.

An employee of a recipient or sub-recipient may not be discharged, demoted, or otherwise discriminated against as a reprisal for disclosing information that the employee reasonably believes is evidence of: gross mismanagement of a federal contract or award; a gross waste of federal funds; an abuse of authority (i.e., an arbitrary and capricious exercise of authority that is inconsistent with the mission of

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NTIA or the U.S. Department of Commerce or the successful performance of a contract or grant awarded by NTIA or the Department) relating to a federal contract or award; a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety; or a violation of a law, rule, or regulation related to a federal contract (including the competition for or negotiation of a contract) or grant.

The recipient or sub-recipient shall inform its employees and contractors, in writing, in the predominant language of the workforce or organization, of employee whistleblower rights and protections under 41 U.S.C. § 4712, as described above and at <https://www.oig.doc.gov/Pages/Whistleblower-Protection-Program.aspx>.

### **C. Reporting**

#### **1. Reviews**

MBDA may, in its sole discretion, conduct an operational assessment three months after the award date of the project, and thereafter as determined by MBDA. MBDA will conduct performance assessments every six months, or at any time MBDA determines necessary, to determine progress made toward achievement of annual goals. These assessments may be conducted in-person onsite at the project or virtually. Projects will be monitored throughout the funding award period and there will be ongoing communication with key project staff. As such, awardees will be required to provide data and outcomes for participants. The level of monitoring will be at MBDA's sole discretion.

#### **2. Reporting Requirements**

The project is required to provide the following reports using the systems and format required by MBDA:

- a) *Financial Reports* – The financial report shall include details on the use of Federal funds and contributions of non-Federal funds (if proposed). The financial reports are to be submitted via Grants Online (or its successor system) on a periodic basis using the SF-425 form. The financial reports are due thirty (30) days after the end of the initial six-month period and every six-month period thereafter. The final report for each budget year is due within ninety (90) days after the expiration of that year.
- b) *Progress Reports* – Progress reports are to be via the Grants Online system (or its successor) on a periodic basis. The periodic reports are due 30 days after the end of the initial six-month period and every six-month period thereafter. The final report is due within ninety (90) days after the expiration of each budget year.

The periodic reports must include data and information to determine project progression and success. MBDA will rely on these reports, data, and information as evidence for success stories, future program design, policy recommendations, and/or statistical purposes.



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Note: Failure to submit reports in a timely manner may result in MBDA award enforcement and/or delayed and/or terminated access to Federal funds.

- c) *Ongoing Performance Reporting* - All required project performance reporting to MBDA shall be conducted via the Internet using a Performance System to be designated and provided by MBDA. Data entry shall occur on a frequent basis and no later than five (5) business days of service action by the project.
  
- d) *Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 Reporting* - The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, 31 U.S.C. 6101 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all sub-awards over \$30,000. Please see the OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 170 and 200, which can be accessed at [http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200_main_02.tpl).
  
- e) *Operational assessment input* – The project is required to provide information as requested by MBDA related to the project’s operational status, including but not limited to branding, website, hiring and training of staff, office space, and compliance with information technology requirements.

**VII. Agency Contact(s)**

For all questions regarding this NOFO, prospective applicants should email [ssbci@mbda.gov](mailto:ssbci@mbda.gov).

**VIII. Other Information**

**A. Conferences**

**1. Pre-Application Webinars**

MBDA will conduct a series of pre-application technical assistance webinars with focus areas noted below. These webinars are designed to help prospective applicants understand MBDA’s Capital Readiness Program and to assist applicants to prepare competitive grant applications. The webinars will cover the following topics:

- Competition Overview, Program Priorities and Objectives, Key Dates, live Question and Answer session
- Application Review Criteria, Budget pitfalls to avoid and best practices, live Question and Answer session
- Measuring success and performance, live Question and Answer session

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MBDA may also announce and hold additional webinars during the competition period. Dates and times for the webinars will be posted on the MBDA's webpage. Participants must register at least 24 hours in advance of the teleconference. Please visit the MBDA website at [www.mbda.gov](http://www.mbda.gov) to register and view recordings of the webinars, as well as other competition information.

In addition, applicants may send questions to MBDA via email at [ssbci@mbda.gov](mailto:ssbci@mbda.gov). Throughout the application period, MBDA will post and regularly update a Frequently Asked Questions document on its website to respond to questions.

**2. Post-Award Webinar**

Awardees will be required to attend a post-award virtual conference (webinar) conducted by MBDA to ensure that awardees have a clear understanding of the project award, terms, conditions, and expectations. During the post-award webinar, MBDA will orient the awardees and key project staff on the purpose and goals of the Program, explain project reporting requirements and procedures, identify available Federal resources that can enhance the capabilities of the project, and provide detailed information about MBDA and other relevant Federal resources, branding and logo requirements, and other online systems the recipient will use during the period of performance. Awardees will receive a license to use MBDA Capital Readiness Program trademarks, program naming requirements, and a branding guide.

**3. National MBDA Capital Readiness Program Implementation Meeting**

In the first year of the award, awardees will be required to attend the National MBDA Capital Readiness Program Implementation Meeting in person. MBDA will provide this forum to kick off the National MBDA Capital Readiness Program and highlight strategies and innovations. The meeting will feature learning opportunities, keynote speakers, workshops, and other training elements that inform attendees of new opportunities and information related to contracts, capital, and markets. Applicants must include expenses to accommodate two (2) individuals, one of whom should be the project director, to travel to the Implementation Meeting in Washington, DC in the proposed budget.

**4. Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week**

Each year of the award, awardees may be required to attend MED Week, a 4-day yearly event. Applicants must budget for up to two (2) individuals, one of whom should be the project director, to travel to MED Week in the proposed budget. Applicants may also budget for a program participant to attend MED Week as well, subject to input and approval from MBDA. The location of MED Week may vary each year. To estimate expenses, applicants should use Washington, DC as the location. MBDA will notify applicants each year no later than two months in advance of MED Week whether in-person attendance is required or whether virtual attendance is permissible. If virtual attendance is permissible, applicants will be allowed to reallocate the associated travel budget items to other line items.

**5. MBDA’s National Training Conference (NTC)**

Each year of the award, awardees may be required to attend MBDA’s National Training Conference, a 4-day yearly event. Applicants must include expenses to accommodate two (2) individuals, one of whom should be the project director, to travel to NTC in the proposed budget. The location of the NTC may vary each year. To estimate expenses, applicants should use Washington, DC as the location. MBDA will notify applicants each year no later than two months in advance of the NTC whether in-person attendance is required or whether virtual attendance is permissible. If virtual attendance is permissible, applicants will be allowed to reallocate the associated travel budget items to other line items.

**6. Grants Management Workshop**

The recipient will also be required to attend one or more virtual Grants Management Workshops facilitated by DOC and/or MBDA’s financial management team, unless otherwise noted by MBDA. Workshops are designed to review key Financial Assistance requirements from MBDA and NOAA GMD.

**B. Collaboration with MBDA**

As part of the cooperative agreement, MBDA shall work collaboratively with each award recipient to serve the SEDI community. Collaboration with MBDA will include items such as: issuance and adherence to the Program guidelines, Grantee site visits, promotion of MBDA-sanctioned events and conferences, annual nomination of SEDI businesses for MBDA recognition, submission of project success stories and/or profiles for MBDA social media promotion, and co-promotion of project-led and MBDA-led activities.

MBDA expects to further support awardees under this Program by:

- Providing the brand identity for MBDA Capital Readiness Program’s projects to include Program name, logo, branding guidelines, naming conventions, and templates for collateral materials. Awardees will receive a license to use MBDA Capital Readiness Program trademarks to facilitate required branding. Awardees **must** follow MBDA branding requirements, including requirements related to program name, program website, and social media use.
- Assistance with facilitating and fostering relationships as well as understanding the mechanics around how to work with a range of key public and private sector stakeholders at the local, state, and Federal levels and private sector.
- Assigning program analysts to support programs with:
  - Project monitoring and advisement
  - Maintaining performance scorecards and dashboards
  - Providing program information, guidance, and support
- Providing a license to use a cloud-based Customer Relationship Management (CRM) data and performance management system, user training and support. Awardees are required to use this system for data tracking and reporting.

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- Providing support to use the Department of Commerce electronic grants system. Awardees are required to use this system.
- Providing strategic subject matter and ecosystem expertise, including updated information about state SSBCI programs and other similar government programs supporting small businesses.
- Conducting periodic Program evaluations and review of findings. Awardees are required to cooperate with all site visits and evaluation activities conducted by MBDA or the Department of Commerce.
- Providing support that fosters collaboration amongst the MBDA national network, including MBDA Business Centers, programs, initiatives and pilot programs.
- Collaborate with MBDA on leveraging a supportive suite of services from DOC and the United States government.

**C. Past Performance and Non-Compliance with Award Provisions**

Unsatisfactory performance under prior Federal awards may result in an application not being considered for funding. Per [2 C.F.R. § 200.339](#), failure to comply with any or all of the provisions of an award – including but not limited to mismanagement or misuse of funds – may have a negative impact on future funding by the Department of Commerce (or any of its operating units) and may be considered grounds for any or all of the following remedies for noncompliance: establishment of an account receivable, withholding payments under any Department of Commerce awards to the recipient, disallowing all or part of the cost of the project or action not in compliance, changing the method of payment from advance to reimbursement only, imposition of other special award conditions, suspension or termination of any active Department of Commerce awards.

**D. Limitation of Liability**

Funding for awards listed in this NOFO is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. In no event will MBDA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for preparation costs for the Applicant’s proposal. Publication of this NOFO does not obligate MBDA or the Department of Commerce to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

**E. Audit Costs**

Audits shall be performed in accordance with audit requirements contained in the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements found in [2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F](#). Recipients expending \$750,000 or more in Federal funds during the recipient’s fiscal period must conduct a single audit in accordance with guidelines outlined in 2 CFR §§ 200.500-.520. For-profit organizations not covered by the audit requirements in 2 CFR §§ 200.500-.520 are subject to the audit requirements set forth in the terms and conditions of the award. Recipients that expend less than \$750,000

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during the recipient's fiscal year in Federal awards are exempt from Federal audit requirements for that year, except as noted in 2 CFR § 200.503, but records must be available for review or audit by appropriate officials of the Federal agency, pass-through entity, and Government Accountability Office (GAO). Applicants are also reminded that other audits may be conducted by the Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General and by other authorized Federal agencies.

**F. Right to Use Information**

The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance, and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce—either through its staff or by hiring a third party—in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed, and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, Federal agents, and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate confidentiality and nondisclosure agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner and by cooperating with Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award. Additional terms and conditions on this topic may be included as a condition of funding.

**G. Freedom of Information Act Disclosure**

Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at [15 C.F.R. Subtitle A, Part 4, Disclosure of Government Information](#). These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be subject to requests for release under FOIA. If an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.

**APPENDIX A: PROJECT ABSTRACT SAMPLE**

At a minimum, the project abstract page must provide the applicant's name, address, telephone number, email address, date of submission, and the Funding Opportunity Number. Applicants should also provide the following additional information: the project title, total budget, and the names, affiliations, complete mailing addresses, email addresses, and telephone numbers of all key persons affiliated with the proposal.

**PROJECT ABSTRACT**

APPLICANT NAME:

APPLICANT ADDRESS:

APPLICANT TELEPHONE NUMBER:

NAME FOR PRIMARY CONTACT:

EMAIL ADDRESS FOR PRIMARY CONTACT:

PROPOSED PROJECT TITLE:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM (NO MORE THAN 250 WORDS):

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT GOALS:

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE:

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER:

TOTAL FEDERAL FUNDING REQUESTED:

TOTAL NON-FEDERAL COST SHARE:

NAME (S) AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR KEY PROJECT PERSONNEL

## APPENDIX B: REQUIRED PERFORMANCE MEASURES, GOALS, AND DEFINITIONS

The Program is a performance-based initiative that uses a range of output and outcome measures to determine satisfactory performance. Applicants should develop workplans that allow them to achieve and report on the required goals and measures. **Applicants must propose specific numerical goals in their applications for each performance measure for each year of the project. Applicants should also identify the rationale for the proposed measure, including any key assumptions underlying the measure.** MBDA may seek clarification or negotiate with an applicant on proposed performance measures, and all performance measures are subject to MBDA review and approval. MBDA will provide additional reporting requirements and guidance (such as requirements to break down reported data based on demographics and sources of capital) to awardees.

The following are the six (6) required measures, goals, and definitions under the Program:

Required Measure	Definition	Annual Goal
<b>Number of SEDI entrepreneurs enrolled in the project</b>	Number of SEDI entrepreneurs enrolled in the awardee’s project during the budget period.	Annual Goal Established by Applicant and approved by MBDA
<b>Number of SEDI entrepreneurs that graduate from the project</b>	Number of SEDI entrepreneurs who are complete project’s curriculum or module(s).	Annual Goal Established by Applicant and approved by MBDA
<b>Number of networking events held</b>	Number of networking events held includes formal networking events and other events that facilitate the formation of professional relationships, such as formal mentorships, peer support, advisory services with particular subject matter expertise, teaming arrangements, and service providers.	Annual Goal Established by Applicant and approved by MBDA
<b>Number of SEDI entrepreneur or SEDI-owned business pitches to Capital provider(s)</b>	Number of pitches made by SEDI entrepreneurs or SEDI-owned businesses to Capital providers that are made during the budget period.	Annual Goal Established by Applicant and approved by MBDA
<b>Number of SEDI-owned businesses formed or scaled</b>	Number of businesses formed includes a new company that is formed to provide a product or service. Number of companies scaled includes, but is not limited to, companies that increase their capacity to produce more products, serve more clients,	Annual Goal Established and approved by MBDA

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	expand services, increase revenues, increase profits, create more jobs, or launch a significant new product or service. Awardees will be required to break down their reports further by each sub-category,	
<b>Total amount of Capital raised (equity investments, debt, grants)</b>	Total dollar value of Capital raised by SEDI entrepreneurs or SEDI-owned businesses as a direct result of assistance received by the project during the budget period. Awardees will be required to break down their reports by line item (equity investments, debt, and grants) and source of Capital (such as SSBCI or other public or private source).	Annual Goal Established by Applicant and approved by MBDA

Applicants must also define at least one additional performance measure:

<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Annual Goal</b>
<b>Other Performance Measure</b>	Defined by applicant to best reflect project scope of work	Annual Goal Established by Applicant and approved by MBDA