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***Big Business in the Bayou: MBDA and Essence Celebrate Successful Launch of Path to Power Conference in New Orleans***

**WASHINGTON (July 12, 2017)** The U.S. Department of Commerce Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) partnered with Essence Communications Inc. to launch the first-ever “Essence Path to Power: Entrepreneurship and Business Conference,” in conjunction with the annual Essence Festival in New Orleans June 30-July 2. The free conference was designed to provide career insight, guidance, networking opportunities, and mentorship to minority entrepreneurs and career professionals at all levels. As part of the conference, MBDA offered specialized business development workshops, an exhibit booth, networking opportunities and one-on-one coaching sessions to attendees.

“This is a great time to be an entrepreneur,” said MBDA Acting National Director Chris Garcia. “The minority business community is thriving and women of color are contributing to the economic growth and success of the Nation. That’s why MBDA is especially proud to partner with Essence and be here in the wonderful city of New Orleans. This is the heart of what MBDA’s mission is. Through events such as this, we’re able to directly invest our time, expertise and resources back into our minority business enterprises,” said Garcia. “Putting America first means putting the success of America’s minority businesses first.”

Essence and MBDA formed an official strategic partnership earlier this year that allows them to collaborate on events and opportunities that further the development and advancement of minority, women-owned businesses locally and globally.

“Essence is dedicated to celebrating the achievements of Black women and championing both their personal and professional successes. Our partnership with MBDA offers us a unique platform to tap into their hopes and dreams—creating personalized programs, events and content that speak directly to their entrepreneurial needs.” said President of Essence Communications Inc., Michelle Ebanks. “Our Path to Power Business Conference at this year’s Essence Festival started out as a simple idea and to see it come to life with the support of partners such as MBDA is absolutely phenomenal. We hope that each attendee left New Orleans empowered and armed with the tools they need to forge their own path to power.”

***About the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)***

MBDA, [www.mbda.gov](http://www.mbda.gov), is the only Federal agency dedicated to the growth and global competitiveness of U.S. minority-owned businesses. Our programs and services better equip minority-owned firms to create jobs, build scale and capacity, increase revenues and expand regionally, nationally and internationally. Services are provided through a network of MBDA Business Centers. Established in 1969, MBDA continues to be a dedicated strategic partner to all

U.S. minority-owned businesses, committed to providing programs and services that provide greater access to capital, contracts and markets. Follow us on Twitter @usmbda.

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