

June 12, 2008

To the editor:

Your piece on the U.S. Small Business Administration was stunning in its omission of hard facts on the agency's transformation—which were provided to the Times—but also in its omission of letters and proclamations of support for the agency's turnaround from industry groups and legislators.

SBA guarantees loans to small businesses. Our progress has been praised by bankers, community lenders, and credit unions. Lenders are coming back into our programs for the first time in years. Why? It used to take 9 months for SBA to honor a guarantee in its flagship program. Now it takes 3 weeks. We have designed more relevant products for the market. Our interactions with banks are increasingly automated and we are providing better support to them throughout our network.

SBA helps small businesses get government contracts. In 2006 (the last year with published data), small businesses reached a record level of federal contracts. Women-owned small businesses experienced their largest year of growth and hit a record level. Small disadvantaged businesses (generally minority-owned) hit a record level.

SBA has also led tough-minded efforts to improve the integrity of small business contracting data and to tighten the rules to qualify, reducing the value of contracts coded as small business by over \$10 billion, increasing new opportunities.

Finally, in 2006 SBA was ranked 30th out of 30 in the Best Places to Work survey among federal agencies. After only one year of reforms, SBA morale skyrocketed, placing it among the top ten in respect for leadership, overall job satisfaction up 9 percent, and satisfaction with leadership communication up 11 to 16 percent.

The story goes much deeper, but then again, the Times knows that. You have seen the data.

A detailed rebuttal of the article and a compilation of comments about SBA are at:  
<http://www.sba.gov/news/index.html>

Sincerely,  
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U.S. Small Business Administration

(Please contact Sean Rushton with SBA with questions: 202-205-6882.)