



News Release

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Experts Gather to Discuss Access to Corporate, Government and International Markets for Women Entrepreneurs

Roundtable Focuses on Current Best Practices, Future Strategies

Washington, DC—Top government officials, women's business leaders, senior corporate executives, and leading researchers from across the nation gathered here earlier this week to discuss the current state of policies and programs for increasing women entrepreneurs' access to corporate, government and international markets, as well as strategies for the future.

The experts' roundtable was held on February 18, 2004, and was sponsored by Project Tsunami, in collaboration with the National Women's Business Council and the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration. Project Tsunami is an organization which serves as a global accelerator for women's entrepreneurship. The roundtable was generously supported by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, which works with partners to foster an environment nationwide in which entrepreneurs have the information and tools they need to succeed.

The roundtable explored best practices in the U.S. and assessed important challenges in women entrepreneurs' access to corporate and government markets as well as access to international trade opportunities. One important goal of the roundtable discussion was to generate ideas for new strategies that may increase women entrepreneurs' access to these key markets.

"This roundtable served as a major catalyst for bringing key players together to discuss initiatives, policies and other actions that have helped women entrepreneurs gain access to these markets," said Virginia Littlejohn, CEO of Project Tsunami. "Most importantly, though, the roundtable was a critical forum for creating future solutions and strategies to increase the base of women suppliers, prime contractors and subcontractors, and exporters. It was a tremendous success and will help inform further research and discussion on these topics."

The Roundtable began with an online forum held to gather information from various subject matter experts across the nation and to begin developing a repository of relevant documents and information. The forum addressed specific questions about

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perceived challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in accessing corporate, government and international markets. Results from the forum informed the Roundtable discussion, which was divided into three sessions: accessing government markets, accessing corporate markets, and accessing international markets. Each session was moderated by key experts from U.S. government agencies, women's business organizations, corporate leaders and women business owners involved in the public policy arena.

"Results of this roundtable will have a major impact, both nationally and globally," said Julie Weeks, Executive Director of the National Women's Business Council. "The best practices identified in these discussions will form the basis for major policy recommendations at national and international conferences in 2004 and 2005. Further, the results of this event will better inform future research and discussion on these topics."

Such research includes two reports due later this year from the NWBC, "Women's Entrepreneurship in the United States: A Policy History," scheduled for release in May, 2004 and "Best Practices for Women's Enterprise Development in the United States: An Update," scheduled for release in June, 2004.

The roundtable event was kicked off with scene-setting remarks from Alta Baker, CEO of Safe Haven Enterprises of Jennings, Louisiana—a business that has successfully accessed corporate, government and international markets. The event also featured keynote speaker Astrid Pregel, former Minister Counselor (Commercial) at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., and former Counsel General in Atlanta for the Southeast United States. In her lunchtime address to the gathered experts, she stated, "The United States is the most entrepreneurial country in the world. American women entrepreneurs are leading a global trend of women's entrepreneurship that is making an increasingly significant impact on local and national economies. There is now a convergence of support and recognition by governments, chambers of commerce and international institutions that women entrepreneurs are an important engine of economic growth. The next few years should see exciting new developments for women's enterprise development globally."

This was the first of three roundtables being sponsored by Project Tsunami with support from the Kauffman Foundation, and in collaboration with the NWBC. The second event will be held on April 8, 2004, and will focus on entrepreneurial education and training. It will be hosted by Georgia Tech DuPree College of Management in Atlanta, GA. The third event will be held on April 28, 2004, and will focus on global policy to spur high-growth women's entrepreneurship. It will be hosted by the Stanford University Faculty Club in Silicon Valley, CA.

To learn more about these roundtables or Project Tsunami, visit www.projecttsunami.org. To learn more about the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration, visit www.ita.doc.gov and to learn more about the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, visit www.emkf.org.

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Project Tsunami was founded as a non-profit corporation in October 2002, with a seed grant from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. Project Tsunami is a global accelerator for women's entrepreneurship and uses a three-pronged strategy to create a worldwide wave of change to advance the women entrepreneurial sector. Project Tsunami uses state-of-the-art technology to deliver a clearinghouse of best practices to a powerful network of leaders worldwide. It spurs improvements for women entrepreneurs in the key areas of data, statistics and research; access to capital and credit; entrepreneurial education and training; access to networks and to corporate, government and international markets; and technology. It also fosters advocacy and constituency-building skills. For more information about Project Tsunami, please contact: Project Tsunami, Incorporated, 3566 13th Street, NW, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20010; phone: 202-332-4411; fax: 202-318-4510, e-mail: info@projecttsunami.org; web site: www.projecttsunami.org.

U.S. Department of Commerce (International Trade Administration)

The International Trade Administration (ITA) helps U.S. businesses participate fully in the growing global marketplace by providing practical information to help businesses select their markets and products, ensuring that they have access to international markets as required by U.S. trade agreements, and by safeguarding businesses from unfair competition from dumped and subsidized imports. ITA is headed by the Under Secretary for International Trade who oversees the operations of ITA's four units. For more information about the International Trade Administration, visit www.ita.doc.gov.

The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation

The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation of Kansas City works with partners to advance entrepreneurship in America and improve the educational achievement of youth. The Kauffman Foundation was established in the mid-1960s by the late entrepreneur and philanthropist Ewing Marion Kauffman. Information about the Kauffman Foundation is available at www.kauffman.org.

The National Women's Business Council

The National Women's Business Council is a bi-partisan federal government council created to serve as an independent source of advice and counsel to the President, Congress, and the U.S. Small Business Administration on economic issues of importance to women business owners. Members of the Council are prominent women business owners and leaders of women's business organizations. The National Women's Business Council is committed to conducting research on issues of importance to women business owners and their organizations; to communicating these findings widely; to connecting the women's business community to public policy makers; and to providing programs and platforms for change in order to expand and improve opportunities for women business owners and their enterprises. For more information about the Council, its mission and activities, contact: National Women's Business Council, 409 3rd Street, SW, Suite 210, Washington, DC 20024; phone: 202-205-3850; fax: 202-205-6825, e-mail: nwbc@sba.gov; Web site: www.nwbc.gov.