



## MBDA Focusing on Access to Capital During Tough Economic Times

Minority firms have been hit hard by the economic crisis. This is due to the fact that minority entrepreneurs are more likely to rely on short term debt to finance their businesses. As financial institutions pull back on the number of loans provided it becomes harder and harder for minority entrepreneurs to start and grow their firms. This leads to minority firms being disproportionately hit by the economic downturn. As a result, there is a heightened focus to find ways to finance the growth of minority firms.

According to Eric Dobyne, MBDA's Chicago Regional Director, "It's clear that a financial jolt to the economy as a whole has threatened the minority business community. The issue is how to get minority businesses the capital they need to take on the task of rebuilding America's economic future," he adds.

It's an issue Mr. Dobyne says has been "talked to death," but now is the time for action. The Access to Capital Initiative, Mr. Dobyne emphasized, "is about finding a national solution" and moving forward with an action plan to implement that solution.

In February and March, more than fifty minority business stakeholders met with the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) at the U.S. Department of Commerce on the topic of capital financing. Stakeholders included representatives from federal, state and local governments, minority business advocacy and trade associations, capital providers, investment institutions, foundations, and academic and policy institutes.

These gatherings served as the foundation for the agenda of the National Capital Access Forum to take place May 11th and 12th at George Washington University in Washington, DC. The goal of the forum is to identify major areas for public and private sector partners to work jointly to increase the flow of capital to minority businesses. In addition to policy initiatives, MBDA expects to expand its network of financial providers and will continue to match minority entrepreneurs with appropriate lending institutions. For more information please visit [www.mbda.gov](http://www.mbda.gov).

## MBDA Grant Saves Moore Street Retail Market in Brooklyn

The Moore St. Retail Market, on the edge of the Williamsburg neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY, is home to 13 minority-owned retail businesses and a focal point for the local Hispanic community. Just one of four surviving public markets built during the depression and run by the city's Economic Development Corporation, the City of New York proposed to demolish the building and replace it with housing.

But thanks to an MBDA grant to the Project for Public Spaces (PPS), the Moore St. Retail Market will continue to operate. Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez (D-NY), whose district includes the Market and who also presides over the House Small Business Committee, sponsored the MBDA grant to PPS, an internationally-recognized design firm specializing in the revitalization of public markets.

John Coyle, NYNEC Business Development Specialist, worked with MBDA's Office of Business Development and PPS to expand its original proposal to include vendor development goals, a comprehensive milestone schedule and a study that could serve as a model for other public markets.

An advisory board was created for the project and included John, staff from PPS, staff of Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez' office, the Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation (BEDC), and Moore Street Retail Market vendors.

The work conducted by PPS as a result of the MBDA grant has been cited by the Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) as the primary justification for BEDC's assuming control of the market and its intent to preserve the Market in its current form.

On December 6, 2008 Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez along with MBDA NY Regional Director Heywood Davenport and other public officials attended a PPS-organized workshop at the Market. The Congresswoman thanked MBDA and PPS for their help in preserving an important resource for the local community.