

# SMALL BUSINESS NETWORK OF THE AMERICAS



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*“We are going to focus more on small and medium-sized businesses, on women’s businesses, making sure that the benefits of trade don’t just go to the largest companies but also go to smaller entrepreneurs and business people.”*

—President Barack Obama

Throughout the Western Hemisphere, governments are creating networks of community-based centers that help business people succeed and create jobs. Business people across the United States can walk into one of roughly 1,100 Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) to get long-term business counseling, managerial training, and market research services for little or no cost. Canada, Mexico, and Brazil have similar networks, and governments in Central and South America and the Caribbean are starting their own national networks of small business support centers.

## Creating a Hemispheric Support Infrastructure

Recognizing the need to work together to create jobs and increase economic growth, President Obama launched the Small Business Network of the Americas (SBNA). The SBNA helps small businesses participate in international trade by linking national networks of small business support centers.

## Promoting Business-to-Business Partnerships

This interconnected network of small business support centers will catalyze greater business-to-business partnerships and trade among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). To encourage business-to-business connections among diaspora communities, the United States launched the Latino American Idea Partnership (La Idea) and the Caribbean Idea Marketplace. These business competitions will award grants to the most transformative ideas for business and investment, and promote business relationships among entrepreneurs in the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

SBNA supports web-based platforms, such as SBDCglobal.com, for small business development counselors and their clients to expand their international relationships through virtual exchanges.

## SBNA fosters SME growth by:

1. Providing a framework to connect businesses across the hemisphere
2. Enhancing access to business counseling services for entrepreneurs
3. Expanding the pool of available resources for business development

## Improving Access to Finance for Small Business

Limited access to finance remains a critical barrier to small business growth and job creation. SBNA offers the opportunity for financial institutions and investors to find high quality investments and expand lending to SMEs. The U.S. government is providing loan guarantees to encourage financial institutions in Latin American and the Caribbean to increase lending to SBDC clients and other SMEs. More broadly, the United States and the 14 other countries in the Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas Initiative are sharing best practices on ways to expand SME access to finance.

For more information on La Idea, go to:  
[www.laidea.us](http://www.laidea.us)

For more information on the Caribbean Idea Marketplace, go to:  
[www.caribbeanidea.org](http://www.caribbeanidea.org)