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Join MBDA Network to Create Jobs and Grow Minority-Owned Enterprises Grant Competition for Three MBDA Business Centers Announced

WASHINGTON (December 12, 2011) - The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) today announced a competitive solicitation for applications from prospective candidates to operate a MBDA Business Center in three distinct areas of the United States: Houston, TX, the State of Louisiana, and either the State of Mississippi or the State of Tennessee. The successful applicants will join a network of more than 35 MBDA Business Centers across the United States, District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

The primary objective of the MBDA Business Centers is to provide strategic business consulting services to minority firms that will result in increased public and private sector contract opportunities and capital investments. An outcome of the services offered by the MBDA Business Centers is the creation and retention of jobs for Americans.

“Job and wealth creation in minority communities around the country is a high priority for the Minority Business Development Agency. With minority-owned firms being established at a high rate, our goal is to unleash their competitive advantages so they are sustainable and globally competitive. These firms will help America win the future,” said Alex Doñé, Associate Director for Business Development at MBDA. “The operators of MBDA Business Center are key partners in achieving MBDA’s mission. Last year, through their combined efforts, MBDA was able to contribute to the creation of more than 6,300 new jobs across the nation and help minority-owned firms secure \$4 Billion in contracts and capital.”

MBDA intends to award three (3) individual cooperative agreements to manage and run the MBDA Business Centers beginning April 1, 2012. The grant award period under this solicitation is four years and successful applicants will initially be funded for the first award year with subsequent funding periods subject to MBDA Business Center performance and funding availability. Awards will range from \$1.0 million to \$1.2 million over the four year period.

Each MBDA Business Center is strategically located in areas with significant levels of minority population and minority-owned firms. The MBDA Business Centers, however, are not limited by geographic region and may serve minority businesses in all fifty states and Puerto Rico.

Eligible Applicants:

For-profit entities (including but not limited to sole-proprietorships, partnerships, limited liability companies and corporations), non-profit organizations, state and local government entities, American Indian Tribes and educational institutions are all eligible to apply to operate the MBDA Business Centers. Entities may apply to operate more than one MBDA Business Center, however, an individual application for each location (Competition ID) is required.

Submission Requirements:

Applicants must review and adhere to the full *Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity* (FFO). This document outlines program details and instructions for submitting an application. The FFO can be accessed at www.Grants.gov or www.mbda.gov.

Applications must be submitted electronically and time-stamped at www.Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) on January 17, 2012. Applications that are time-stamped after the deadline will not be considered.

MBDA will conduct a pre-application teleconference on December 14, 2011 at 2:00 p.m. EST. The goal of the teleconference is to provide a background and summary of the MBDA Business Center program, as well as provide potential applicants with the opportunity to ask questions about the program and the application process. The time and registration instructions for the pre-application conference will be posted on MBDA's website. Applicants should visit MBDA at www.mbda.gov for more information. Interested applicants unable to participate in the pre-application teleconference may access a recording of the teleconference and materials on the Agency's website the following day.

Note: The MBDA Business Center program is not a grant program to start or to expand an individual business. Applications must be to operate a MBDA Business Center and to provide business consulting services to eligible minority-owned firms as set forth in the *Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity*. Applications that do not meet these requirements will not be considered by MBDA for funding.

About the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)

MBDA (mbda.gov), a bureau at the U.S. Department of Commerce, serves minority entrepreneurs across America who are building and growing enterprises. MBDA helps minority-owned firms become better equipped to create jobs, impact local economies and compete successfully in domestic and global marketplaces. With a nationwide network of business centers and strategic partners, MBDA assists minority entrepreneurs and business owners with consulting services, contract and financing opportunities, bonding and certification services, building business-to-business alliances and executive training.

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