

These requirements will be used to generate increased results with respect to financing and contracts awarded to minority-owned firms and thus, are a key component of this program.

**DATES:** The closing date for applications for each MBDC project is October 10, 2003. Anticipated time for processing of applications is one hundred twenty (120) days from the date of publication of this notice.

MBDA anticipates that awards for the MBDC program will be made with a start date of January 1, 2004. Completed applications for the MBDC program must be (1) mailed (USPS postmark) to the address below; or (2) received by MBDA no later than 5 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. Applications postmarked later than the closing date or received after the closing date and time will not be considered.

**ADDRESSES:** If the application is mailed by the applicant or its representative, they must submit one signed original plus two (2) copies of the application. Completed application packages must be mailed to: Office of Business Development, Office of Executive Secretariat, HCHB, Room 5063, Minority Business Development Agency, U.S. Department of Commerce, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20230.

If the application is hand-delivered by the applicant or his/her representative, one signed original plus two (2) copies of the application must be delivered to Room 1874, which is located at Entrance #10, 15th Street, NW., between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For further information or to obtain an application package, contact the specified MBDA National Enterprise Center (NEC) for the geographic service area in which the project will be located or visit MBDA's Minority Business Internet Portal (MBDA Portal) at <http://www.mbda.gov>.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Electronic Access: Applicants are encouraged to submit their proposal electronically via the Internet and mail or hand-deliver only the pages that require original signatures by the closing date and time stated above. Applicants may submit their applications on MBDA's website: <http://www.mbda.gov>. All required forms are located at this web address. However, the following paper forms must be submitted with original signatures in conjunction with any electronic submissions by the closing date and time stated above: (1) SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance; (2) the SF-424B, Assurances-Non-

Construction Programs; (3) the SF-LLL (Rev. 7-97) (if applicable), Disclosure of Lobbying Activities; (4) Department of Commerce Form CD-346 (if applicable), Applicant for Funding Assistance; and (5) the CD-511, Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; Drug-Free Workplace Requirements and Lobbying.

**Pre-Application Conference:** A pre-application conference will be held for the MBDC project solicitation. Contact the specified MBDA NEC for the geographic service area in which the project will be located to receive further information. Proper identification is required for entrance into any Federal building. Notice of the pre-application conference will be available on MBDA Portal at <http://www.mbda.gov>.

**Authority:** Executive Order 11625 and 15 U.S.C. 1512.

*Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA):* 11.800 Minority Business Development Center Program.

### Program Description

MBDA is soliciting applications for the following geographic service areas: Georgia Statewide, North Carolina Statewide, Puerto Rico Islandwide, South Carolina Statewide, Illinois Statewide, Ohio Statewide, Michigan Statewide, Dallas/Ft. Worth/Arlington, El Paso, New Mexico Statewide, San Antonio, Manhattan/Bronx/Westchester, Queens/Nassau/Suffolk, New Jersey Statewide, Pennsylvania Statewide, Washington Metro, Williamsburg (Brooklyn), Alaska Statewide, Arizona Statewide, Los Angeles Metro, Inland Empire, Central/Northern California, Washington Statewide.

The MBDC Program will concentrate on rapid growth potential minority business enterprises (MBEs), e.g., those generating \$500,000 or more in annual revenues or capable of generating significant employment and long-term economic growth. The MBDC Program shall continue to leverage telecommunications technology, including the Internet, and a variety of online computer-based resources to dramatically increase the level of service that the MBDC can provide to minority-owned firms, including micro-enterprises.

The MBDC program incorporates an entrepreneurial approach to building market stability and improving the quality of services delivered. This strategy expands the reach of the MBDC by requiring project operators to develop and build upon strategic alliances with public and private sector partners, as a means of serving the growing numbers of minority firms with rapid growth potential within the

project's geographic service area. In addition, MBDA will establish specialized business consulting training programs to support the MBDC client assistance services. These MBDC training programs are designed specifically to foster growth assistance to its clients. The MBDC will also encourage increased collaboration and client/non-client referrals among the MBDA-sponsored networks. This will provide a comprehensive approach to serving the emerging sector of the minority business community.

The MBDC will operate through the use of trained professional business consultants who will assist minority entrepreneurs through direct client engagements.

Entrepreneurs eligible for assistance under the MBDC Program are African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Spanish-speaking Americans, Aleuts, Asian Pacific Americans, Asian Indians, Native Americans, Eskimos, and Hasidic Jews.

As part of its strategy for continuous improvement, the MBDC shall expand its delivery capacity to all minority firms, with greater emphasis on emerging/rapid growth-potential minority firms capable of impacting economic growth and employment. MBDA wants to ensure that MBDC clients are receiving a consistent level of service throughout its funded network. To that end, MBDA will require MBDC consultants to attend a series of training courses designed to achieve standardized services and quality expectations. Further information about the training is provided in this document under the heading of Work Requirements.

### Background

Under the MBDC Program, MBDA has selected locations for the establishment of Centers based on the size of the population in those markets and the density of rapid growth-potential minority business enterprises (MBE), as established by MBDA and U.S. Census Bureau data, as well as other available information.

The MBDC Program is one of MBDA's core competencies of overall business development efforts. Under this strategy, the MBDC will be expected to provide the following four types of client services:

1. **Client Assessment**—This activity requires the MBDC to conduct a standardized client assessment, which includes identifying the client's immediate and long term needs, and establishes a projected growth track. MBDA shall provide a new and innovative electronic tool to support