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MBDA Announces Grant Competition

*Agency seeks candidates to operate Minority Business Centers
in Upper Midwest, Northeast and Southern California*

WASHINGTON (March 30, 2011) - The U.S. Commerce Department's Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) today opened a grant competition to candidates interested in operating MBDA Business Centers in three U.S. regions: the Upper Midwest, the Northeast and Southern California. Selected candidates will receive funding to support business center operations and will join a national network of 27 other MBDA Business Centers.

The primary objective of MBDA Business Centers is to provide strategic business consulting services to minority firms that will result in increased public and private sector contracting opportunities and capital investments, ultimately leading to the creation of new U.S. jobs.

"Minority-owned firms generate a trillion dollars in economic output and are responsible for employing more than 5.9 million Americans. Our goal is to unleash their competitive advantages so they can help America win the future," said Alex Doñé, associate director for business development at MBDA. "The leaders of our MBDA Business Centers are key partners in achieving MBDA's mission and helping minority-owned firms to grow through assistance with exports, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures and strategic partnerships."

MBDA intends to award three (3) individual cooperative agreements to manage and run the MBDA Business Centers beginning September 1, 2011. The grant award covers a five-year period, and selected candidates 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 \$225,000 to \$355,000 annually.

Each MBDA Business Center is strategically located in areas with substantial minority populations and minority-owned firms. However, MBDA Business Centers 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 MBDA

Business Centers. Entities may apply to operate more than one MBDA Business Center, however, an individual application for each location is required.

Submission Requirements:

Applicants must review and adhere to the program details and instructions for submitting an application identified in the *Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity* (FFO). 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. EDT on May 5, 2011. Applications time-stamped after the deadline will not be considered.

Pre-application teleconference:

MBDA will conduct a pre-application teleconference on Thursday, April 7. The teleconference will provide a background and summary of the MBDA Business Center program, and offer potential applicants an opportunity to ask questions about the program and the application process. The time and registration instructions for the teleconference will be posted on MBDA's website shortly. Applicants should visit MBDA at www.mbda.gov for more information.

Note: The MBDA Business Center program is not a grant program to start or expand an individual business. Applications must be to operate an MBDA Business Center and 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.

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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