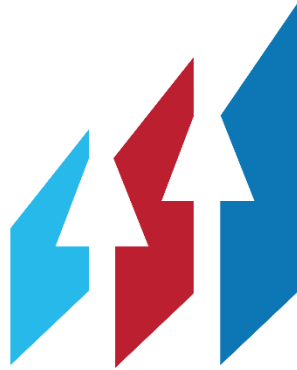


FY 2025 Notice of Funding Opportunity



MBDA
MINORITY BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

MBDA Women's Entrepreneurship Program

MBDA Women's Entrepreneurship Program NOFO
Funding Opportunity Number MBDA-OBC-2025-1002156

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Awarding Agency Name	Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC)
Funding Opportunity Title	MBDA Women's Entrepreneurship Program
Announcement Type	Initial: This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is publishing application submission requirements and application review procedures for MBDA's Women's Entrepreneurship Program , through which MBDA plans to award four-year cooperative agreements to non-profit entities for activities designed to increase the capacity of minority business enterprises (MBEs) to launch, sustain, obtain capital for, and scale their ventures, with a focus on addressing barriers traditionally experienced by women entrepreneurs. This Program is authorized by § 15 U.S.C. 9561.
Funding Opportunity Number	MBDA-OBC-2025-1002156
Assistance Listing Number(s)	11.802 Minority Business Resource Development
Key Dates and Application Submission Instructions	<p>Email of Intent Deadline: Due February 12, 2025, by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. The Email of Intent is voluntary but strongly encouraged. Applicants who decide to submit Emails of Intent must email them to WEP@mbda.gov as explained in Section III.D of the NOFO.</p> <p>Application Deadline: Due March 17, 2025, by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. Applications submitted after this deadline will not be reviewed or considered.</p> <p>All proposals must be received on or before the deadline. Applications may be submitted starting from the publication date of this NOFO up to the deadline above. Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered for funding. Applications must be submitted electronically via grants.gov.</p> <p>Applicants are responsible for ensuring the completeness of their application.</p>

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Funding Opportunity Description	The MBDA Women's Entrepreneurship Program (Program or WEP) is designed to improve the entrepreneurial outcomes of MBEs, including entrepreneurs at all stages of business development, from ideation to established businesses. While MBDA encourages applicants to include in their proposal services that address barriers traditionally experienced by women entrepreneurs, all MBEs are eligible to receive services under this Program. This notice requests applications from qualified organizations that have the expertise to provide a range of services including counseling, training, and technical assistance to launch, sustain, obtain capital for, and scale their ventures.
Cost Share and Match Requirements	There is no cost-share requirement for this award.
Eligible Applicants	<p>Eligible applicants are limited to organizations that meet both of the following two requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The organization must be a private nonprofit organization as described in paragraph (3), (4), (5), or (6) of section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from tax under section 501(a); <u>and</u> (2) The organization must provide – as a primary activity of the organization – services to minority business enterprises, whether through education, making grants or loans, or other similar activities. <p>See Section III.A, below. Requests from individuals will not be considered for funding.</p>
Pre-Application Technical Assistance Webinars and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Document	<p>MBDA will conduct a series of pre-application technical assistance webinars with focus areas noted below. These webinars are designed to help prospective applicants understand the Program so they can prepare competitive grant applications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webinar I – Competition overview, Program priorities and objectives, key dates • Webinar II – Application review criteria • Webinar III – Budget best practices and pitfalls to avoid, measuring success and performance <p>Dates and times for the webinars listed above and any</p>

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	<p>additional webinars will be posted on the MBDA website. Participants should register at least 24 hours in advance of the webinars. Please visit the MBDA website at www.mbda.gov to register and view recordings of the webinars, as well as other additional information.</p> <p>MBDA will post responses to questions in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on its website to respond to questions. The FAQ will be updated regularly throughout the application period. Webinar participants can submit questions for possible MBDA inclusion in the FAQs. In addition, applicants may send questions to MBDA via email at wep@mbda.gov. Please note that MBDA will not provide individual responses to questions.</p>
Award Notification	<p>If selected for potential award and approved by the Grants Officer, the applicant can anticipate receiving an award within approximately 150 calendar days of the closing date of the NOFO.</p>

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APPENDICES

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I. Program Description

A. Program Objectives and Priorities

Women own more than 14,017,000 businesses, employ 12,164,000 million people, and generate \$2.7 trillion in revenue.¹ Despite a steady increase in women's business ownership, women entrepreneurs face unique challenges that have led to lower rates of entrepreneurship, revenue, and access to capital among women compared to men. Additionally, minority women entrepreneurs lag other women entrepreneurs in generated revenue but employ more workers on average. Addressing these barriers—and reaching parity for women entrepreneurs—can generate an additional \$7.9 trillion for the U.S. economy.²

MBDA seeks to fund eligible entities to implement the MBDA Women's Entrepreneurship Program (WEP or "Program"). Under the Program, eligible entities will implement **evidence-based approaches that will increase the capacity of Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) to launch, sustain, obtain capital for, and scale their ventures.** Applicants can propose the approach that is most suitable to the geography and the characteristics of the entrepreneurial ecosystem³ they propose to serve (e.g., types of industries, business climate, resources available to entrepreneurs). Approaches may include cohort-based training programs, accelerators focused on high growth industries, a curriculum-based approach from which entrepreneurs "graduate," discrete training modules focused on core business management skills, or mentoring and counseling interventions which target ideation and nascent stage entrepreneurs. **Approaches must be evidenced-based.** Applicants must (1) demonstrate a clear understanding, backed by evidence, of barriers to entrepreneurship, including barriers traditionally experienced by women entrepreneurs, and (2) articulate a clear approach, grounded in existing evidence, to addressing those barriers in a way that will build the capacity of MBEs to launch sustain, obtain capital for, and scale their ventures.

Applicants should demonstrate the efficacy of their programs by citing research or past performance.

To increase the capacity of MBEs and improve their entrepreneurial outcomes, MBDA has established the following priorities for this Program. **Applicants must address Priority Area 1 (Access to Capital) and must choose at least one more Priority Area to address in their proposal.**

Priority Area 1: Facilitate Access to Capital

Facilitating access to capital for MBEs is critical to ensuring they have fair access to the tools needed to launch their business ventures. For example, even when an entrepreneur has a business-ready idea, they might lack the institutional banking relationships that

¹ Wells Fargo (2024) The 2024 Impact of Women-Owned Businesses. <https://smallbusinessresources.wf.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/wells-fargo-2024-impact-of-women-owned-businesses.pdf>

² Wells Fargo (2024) The 2024 Impact of Women-Owned Businesses. <https://smallbusinessresources.wf.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/wells-fargo-2024-impact-of-women-owned-businesses.pdf>

³ An entrepreneurial ecosystem is a set of social, economic, cultural, and political factors that influence the development of entrepreneurs and businesses.

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would allow them to access traditional sources of funding. Similarly, they may lack the awareness and capacity to apply for or participate in programs, including government programs, designed to facilitate small business access to capital. Ensuring these entrepreneurs can access capital (including debt or equity), is essential to business sustainability.

Priority Area 2: Support Participation in High Growth Industries⁴

Women entrepreneurs are underrepresented in high growth industries, including STEM. While the United States is a leader in research and development, and women comprise nearly half of the American workforce, women represent less than 30 percent of the STEM workforce, and an even smaller percentage when considering STEM entrepreneurship.⁵ Providing support to MBEs who seek to launch STEM-focused ventures is essential to supporting our nation's critical supply chains and increasing participation in high growth industries.

Priority Area 3: Increase Entrepreneurs' Capacity to Do Business with the Federal Government

The Federal government is the largest buyer of goods and services in the United States. In FY 2024, the federal government spent approximately \$764 billion on federal contracts. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, in FY 2023, 28% of prime contracts were awarded to small businesses representing more than \$178.6 billion in federal spending. Women-owned business realized 14 percent of this small business spending or \$25.5 billion. Federal contracts are an incredible opportunity to expand small businesses and to create wealth for entrepreneurs. Expanding access to opportunity, including through the business certification process, can increase the number of businesses able to contract with the federal government at competitive prices and create steady income streams for entrepreneurs and their employees.

For this Program, MBE is defined as “a business enterprise— (i) that is not less than 51 percent-owned by 1 or more socially or economically disadvantaged individuals; and (ii) the management and daily business operations of which are controlled by 1 or more socially or economically disadvantaged individuals.” (see 15 U.S.C. 9501(9)). For this Program, the definition of “MBE” includes entrepreneurs at all stages of business development, including nascent or ideation stage entrepreneurs, and does not require or imply any success or experience in any past entrepreneurship activity

An important aspect of the Program will be to document the efficacy of the approach and the impact of its implementation on individual outcomes. As such, applicants will be required to maintain communications with recipients of services funded by this program and establish a process by which data is collected post program completion to support a third-party evaluation that will be funded by MBDA.

⁴ A high growth industry is an economic sector that experiences significantly higher rates of growth in comparison to other industries (i.e., Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, Cybersecurity, Biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, Electric vehicles)

⁵ U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. “Reaching the Full Potential of STEM for Women and the U.S. Economy. 2015; National Women's Business Council (2023) 2023 Annual Report. https://www.nwbc.gov/annual-reports/2023/report/NWBC_AR_2023_FINAL.pdf

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Applicants may provide proposed services in-person, virtually, or through a combination of in-person and virtual services. Awards may fund operational and programmatic costs related to developing and supporting local, statewide, or regional (multi-state) initiatives. However, an applicant proposing to serve MBEs significantly outside its local geographic area must clearly demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the business ecosystem it hopes to serve and its challenges and opportunities, and provide an effective outreach plan to reach and serve MBEs in that area, industry, or market segment.

Applicants must have an outreach and engagement strategy to ensure that its project reaches a broad array of MBEs. In addition, successful applicants must develop and maintain a webpage accessible to the public that discusses and disseminates information about their project under this Program. MBDA will provide more detailed webpage requirements, branding requirements, and a license to use any required Program logos as part of the post-award process.

B. Statutory Authority

The statutory authority for the MBDA Women’s Entrepreneurship Program is 15 U.S.C. 9561.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

In fiscal year (FY) 2025, MBDA expects to obligate approximately \$2 million for multi-year awards, which MBDA anticipates funding annually, made under this NOFO for the selected proposals; the financial assistance awards will have an overall four-year period of performance. MBDA anticipates making approximately 5 awards under this NOFO.

The funding amount for each award in FY 2025 will be approximately \$400,000. MBDA anticipates that an equivalent amount will be available in FY 2026 through FY 2028 to support continuation of the program for the subsequent budget periods (12 months each) of the selected projects.

Receipt of any prospective funding is contingent upon the availability of appropriated funds, satisfactory performance, and continued relevance to program objectives and will be at the sole discretion of MBDA. In addition, MBDA may terminate an award, and thereby decline to fund future years, for failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the award or if an award no longer effectuates MBDA’s program goals or priorities. Publication of this NOFO does not obligate Department of Commerce or MBDA to award any specific cooperative agreement or to obligate all or any part of available funds.

B. Project/Award Period

Subject to availability of funding, MBDA expects to issue awards for a total period of performance of four years from August 1, 2025 – July 31, 2029. The initial budget year will be 12 months. Subsequent budget years will be for 12-month terms, as outlined below.

Budget Year	Fiscal Year	Months	Start and End Dates
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Year 1	FY25	12 months	August 1, 2025	July 31, 2026
Year 2	FY26	12 months	August 1, 2026	July 31, 2027
Year 3	FY27	12 months	August 1, 2027	July 31, 2028
Year 4	FY28	12 months	August 1, 2028	July 31, 2029

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Funding will be made through a cooperative agreement. After the award is made, MBDA will be substantially involved in the activities of this Program, including but not limited to the following anticipated activities:

- Providing training relating to the purpose of this Program, eligible activities, and program performance goals.
- Requiring recipients to participate in a pre-implementation conference with MBDA to review the proposed curricula and emerging program models, services, and performance goals that the recipient will provide and measure.
- Providing necessary guidance and facilitating collaborations with other MBDA programs and initiatives.
- Facilitating collaborations with the Department of Commerce (DOC) and other federal agency programs as appropriate.
- Monitoring activities carried out by the awardee, including by soliciting feedback from participants, including with a focus on women-owned MBEs, as applicable.
- Conducting periodic Program evaluations and providing findings for improvement.
- Funding and participating in a comprehensive evaluation of the Program through a third-party evaluator.
- Establishing and enforcing administrative, communications, and reporting requirements for each awardee.
- Providing access to and training for a performance management reporting system.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are limited to organizations that meet both of the following two requirements:

- (1) The organization must be a private nonprofit organization as described in paragraph (3), (4), (5), or (6) of section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from tax under section 501(a); and
- (2) The organization must provide – as a primary activity of the organization – services to Minority Business Enterprises, whether through education, making grants or loans, or other similar activities.

Entities must submit documentation and evidence that they meet both eligibility requirements in order to be considered for funding.

B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement

A non-Federal cost share of the Federal funding is not required. If an applicant provides in-kind contributions to the project, the contributions will not be considered during the evaluation process. Further, any in-kind contributions must be documented and directed towards eligible project costs and meet applicable Federal cost principles and other requirements of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at [2 CFR Part 200](#). Revenue may be, but is not required to be, generated from fees for service, client fees, membership fees, or other appropriate fees associated with services or activities funded through this Program as long as they are approved by MBDA. Any income generated must be used towards the project. Awardees cannot charge fees so high that Program-funded services and activities are not accessible to a broad range of MBEs.

C. Other Criteria That May Affect Eligibility

None.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

All application materials and forms are available at the Grants.gov website (<http://www.grants.gov>). Helpful competition materials such as FAQs will be made available on the MBDA website (www.mbda.gov).

B. Content and Form of Application

Applications for the Program must be complete and follow the format described in this NOFO. A complete application packet consists of the following forms and required submissions described below. Applications that fail to include all the necessary elements may not be reviewed or considered and may be disqualified.

Required Application Content		
1	Project Abstract	One (1) page limit
2	Project Narrative	Twenty (20) page limit
3	Supporting Documents (i.e., letters of commitment, resumes)	
4	Standard Forms	
	• SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance)	
	• SF-424A (Budget Information Non-Construction Programs)	
	• SF-424B (Assurances for Non-Construction Programs)	
	• CD-511 (Certification Regarding Lobbying)	
	• SF-LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities) (if applicable)	
5	Budget Narrative	
7	Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) Agreement Documentation (if applicable)	

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Required Application Content		
8	Project Performance Worksheet (see Section II.2.c, below, for requirements)	

1. Project Abstract (One (1) page limit)

At a minimum, the project abstract page must provide the applicant's name, address, telephone number, email address, date of submission, project executive summary, brief description of project goals, and the Funding Opportunity Number. Applicants should also provide the following additional information: the project title, total budget, start and end dates, and the names, affiliations, complete mailing addresses, email addresses, and telephone numbers of all key person(s) who will lead the project the proposal. Note: The executive summary should be no more than 250 words that includes a description of the approach that will be used and the priorities that will be addressed. If your application is selected for funding, MBDA may publish this executive summary, or portions of it, on its or other relevant websites and via social media. See Appendix A for a template.

2. Project Narrative (Twenty (20) page limit)

All applications must contain a detailed project narrative with defined sections as described below. All pages of the application must be consecutively numbered. Material beyond 20 pages may not be read or considered. Applicants are encouraged to provide a clear and concise narrative that includes a compelling justification for the project and articulates the needs of the geographic area, the efficacy of curricula to be developed and implemented, and MBEs to be served.

- a. **Project Description:** The applicant should fully describe and explain what is being proposed, including:
 - i. The geographic region where services will be provided and the need for focused entrepreneurial development services as established through data. Applicants should also describe the regional ecosystems in which they operate, which could include economic makeup, rural versus urban areas, and demographic information. The location and geographic area should directly correspond to Questions 14 and 16 on the SF-424. (see Section V.A.1.a (i.e., Evaluation Criteria 1.a))
 - ii. A detailed description of the approach that will be utilized (including the types of businesses that will be served – e.g., ideation phase entrepreneurs, growth-stage businesses, any industries of focus, etc.) and how it will lead to the realization of project and entrepreneurial outcomes. Approaches and the activities that will be implemented must address at least two of the Program's Priority Areas (see Section I.A, above). (see Section V.A.1.b (i.e., Evaluation Criterion 1.b))
 - iii. Identification and description of key stakeholders and partners that will be leveraged to accomplish the Program's objectives. If the Applicant proposes to leverage third-party partnerships and their respective resources

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- to accomplish the proposed project under this NOFO, the Applicant must provide proof of commitment by the third party as an attachment to the proposal. (see Section V.A.1.c (i.e., Evaluation Criterion 1.c))
- iv. Description of the strategies the project will implement to drive the participation of MBEs in the project. This includes but is not limited to the applicant's outreach strategy. If the applicant proposes to leverage stakeholders or other partners for outreach or awareness raising, the applicant should provide a description of those stakeholders'/partners' roles and an indication that they have agreed to collaborate with or partner with the project. (see Section V.A.1.d (i.e., Evaluation Criterion 1.d)).
 - v. To the extent an applicant seeks to receive bonus points as outlined in the Bonus Points section of the Evaluation Criteria in this NOFO, the applicant must provide a detailed description and justification that aligns with the Bonus Points categories identified.
- b. **Applicant Capability:** The applicant must present information describing the experience and qualifications of the organization to carry out the proposed project. The application should include the following information:
- i. A concise summary of the Applicant's organization; its mission and programs, experience, projects or services similar to those proposed; and a list of previous or current projects or services relevant to the proposal. (see Section V.A.2.a (i.e., Evaluation Criterion 2.a))
 - ii. A clear explanation of how the organization meets the following eligibility criterion: "The organization must provide – as a primary activity of the organization – services to minority business enterprises, whether through education, making grants or loans, or other similar activities." Applicants should provide evidence to support their explanation (see Eligibility Criterion in Section III.A, above).
 - iii. An overview that emphasizes the applicant's experience and strategies for the provision of women-focused evidence-based entrepreneurial development support services. This should include past metrics or accomplishments demonstrating success serving MBEs. (see Section V.A.2.b (i.e., Evaluation Criterion 2.b))
 - iv. Applicants should provide proof of capability to implement and manage a project of the type, scope, and breadth proposed. This should include a discussion of financial and management infrastructure and can include, but is not limited to, public records of accomplishments, public citations, and/or letters of referrals or recommendations as attachments to the proposal. (see Section V.A.2.c (i.e., Evaluation Criterion 2.c))
 - v. A chart showing the Applicant's organizational structure, including a functional statement noting the duties and/or responsibilities of all units that will comprise the organization during the period for which the proposal applies. Applicants must also provide a brief narrative outlining the reporting structure and/or governance of the Project. (see Section V.A.2.d (i.e., Evaluation Criterion 2.d))
 - vi. Applicants must provide a one-page bio or resume for each of the

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Applicant's key personnel(s) showing relevant experience of the leader(s). MBDA expects that an Administrator or Department Head or other staff with similar authority will serve as the Project Director, to oversee the success of the proposed project. The biographies and attachments should be included as attachments to your proposal and will not count toward the 20-page limit. Applicants must identify a Project Director, however, if the identified person is not currently employed by the applicant, the Project Start-up Narrative should note when the person will be onboarded. (see Section V.A.2.d (i.e., Evaluation Criterion 2.d))

- c. **Project Performance and Start-up:** The Project Performance and Start-up narrative communicates how the proposed project's progress, production, and impact will be measured. This narrative should clearly describe how the project's activities will generate results for MBDA's performance measures. Applicants are encouraged to be data driven, which may require them to collect more data than what MBDA requires for performance reporting. The Project Performance and Start-up narrative has three components: **1) Project Impact narrative, 2) Project Performance Worksheet, and 3) Project Start-up narrative.**
- i. The **Project Impact narrative** should clearly describe what your proposed intervention intends to accomplish; how the goals, activities, and measures align; how data will be collected; how project activities will generate results for MBDA's and project specific performance measures, and importantly, how the curricula will yield improved entrepreneurial outcomes. Applicants must present a clearly articulated theory(s) of change for the curricula that will be developed and implemented. Importantly, applicants must describe how data will be collected and how data will be used to inform program delivery. (see Section V.A.3.a (i.e., Evaluation Criterion 3.a))
 - ii. The **Project Performance Worksheet** must be in spreadsheet format that will present the core measures that are required by MBDA as well as project-specific measures that the applicant proposes to track through the life of the project. (see Section V.A.3.b (i.e., Evaluation Criterion 3.b)). For each measure, the applicant must propose a numeric target. The template must include the following:
 - a. Core Measures (**Clients Served, Capital Infusion, New Business Starts, Jobs Created and Retained, and Percentage of Businesses Realizing Revenue Growth**), which are quantifiable indicators used to determine if a project or program is achieving its desired objectives. See Appendix C for additional details.
 - b. Numeric Targets keyed to each Core Measure (i.e., the anticipated number of clients you will serve, new business starts to be realized, jobs supported, and the dollar value of capital that program participants will obtain).
 - c. Project-specific measures and related numeric targets, if applicable.

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- d. Note: Targets must be disaggregated by year and by quarter. Grantees should make every effort to reflect seasonality in their projections (seasonality is the presence of regular fluctuations in a time series with peaks and troughs that can be observed and measured). Similarly, MBDA recommends that applicants ensure that their proposed numeric targets for the beginning of the program reflect project ramp-up and anticipated start date for delivery/implementation of the proposed approach.
- iii. The **Project Start-up narrative** should clearly describe the operational processes and procedures that will be deployed to launch the project, such as hiring key staff (i.e., Director); securing locations to house the project; finalizing partnership agreements; and ensuring readiness for transmitting data to MBDA. Importantly, awardees can use the systems of their choice to collect data. However, MBDA will provide post-award guidance on the submission of data and participation in the evaluation of the WEP Program.

3. Supporting Documents

If cited in the proposal, the applicant must provide the following additional documentation that supports the proposed project, including:

- Memoranda of Understanding or Memoranda of Agreement between project partners.
- Letters of Support, Letters of Commitment, or other evidence of existing strategic relationships, collaborations, or alliances. Letters of Support or Commitment should be signed by an individual authorized to commit the organization. Letters of Support or Commitment that provide detail about how the entity intends to support the applicant and/or engage with the project will be viewed as more competitive.
- Resumes of the proposed project director and key project staff
- Data/literature cited in the Project Narrative.
- Letters of recommendation from MBEs who were served by the applicant, if available.

4. Standard Forms (SF), Budget Narrative and Matching Commitment

The applicant must provide the required Standard Forms, attachments, and budget information as described in the section below.

- a. **Standard Application Forms.** Please refer to the application package available through Grants.gov. Please review each form to determine which is required with the application. Each applicant may not be required to submit all forms listed, depending on the project type or the applicant type.
 - i. **Signed SF-424.** The SF-424 must be signed by the authorized organization representative. Electronic signatures submitted through Grants.gov satisfy this requirement. **ONE SF-424 form will cover all budget years.** Please note that the authorized organization representative will be recognized as the main point of contact to receive official notifications on the application throughout the competition and to sign on behalf of the organization.

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- ii. **SF-424A.** Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs. **Applicants must submit a SEPARATE 424A for EACH** budget year. In Section D, Forecasted Cash Needs, the total federal amount that can be expended may not exceed \$400,000. The maximum drawdown amount may not exceed \$400,000 for each year of the four-year award.
 - iii. **SF-424B.** Assurances for Non-Construction Programs. The SF-424B must be signed by the authorized organization representative.
 - iv. **Budget Narrative.** A detailed budget narrative must be completed and submitted for all non-construction applications. The Federal and non-federal share amounts must be separated out for each budget year. (see additional information below)
 - v. **SF-LLL.** Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)
 - vi. **Commerce Department (CD)-511.** Certification Regarding Lobbying.
- b. **Budget Narrative.** Applicants **MUST** provide a clear budget narrative that identifies and justifies how funds in each cost category will be used to support the proposed project. The budget narrative should specifically address each budget line item (including both the Federal and matching non-Federal share). Please note that the budget narrative total should match exactly the total project costs listed in both the SF-424, Question 18, Line g ("TOTAL") and the appropriate Federal and non-Federal total fields of the SF-424A. Please also note that successful applicants will be required to develop and maintain a project-specific webpage through the duration of the project. Applicants should plan their budgets accordingly. MBDA will provide post-award guidance regarding webpage requirements and branding requirements.
- c. **Required Travel Item(s).** Travel expenses for all required travel items should include transportation, lodging, and per diem and must align with the current Federal travel guidelines, found at <https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/regulations/federal-travel-regulation>
- i. Applicants are required to budget for a 4-day trip for two staff persons (one of whom must be the project director) to attend MBDA's Women's Entrepreneurship Program Implementation Meeting in Washington, DC, during the first year of the program. The Implementation Meeting is a one-time event.
 - ii. Applicants are required to budget for two additional trips for each year of the program for up to two staff persons (one of whom must be the project director):
 - MBDA's Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week, and
 - MBDA's National Training Conference.
 - Applicants should plan for each trip to be 4 days. The location of the events may vary. To estimate costs, please use Washington, DC as the location. Applicants may also budget for a Program

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participant (i.e., recipient of Program-funded services) to travel to MED Week each year, subject to MBDA input and approval.

MBDA will notify applicants no later than two months in advance of each planned event whether in-person attendance is required or whether virtual attendance is permissible. If virtual attendance is permissible, applicants will be allowed to reallocate the associated travel budget items to other line items.

5. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement Documentation (as applicable)

Applicants requesting to use established indirect cost rate are required to submit a copy of their current and signed Federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the application package. If an applicant does not have a current indirect cost rate established by a cognizant Federal agency, provide a statement to this effect. If a successful applicant includes indirect costs in the budget that exceed the de minimis rate (discussed below) and has not established an indirect cost rate with a cognizant Federal agency, the applicant will be required to obtain such a rate in accordance with Section B.06 of the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, dated November 12, 2020.

Alternatively, in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.414(f), a non-Federal entity that does not have a current negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 15 percent of modified total direct costs. Applicants proposing a 15 percent de minimis rate pursuant to [2 C.F.R. § 200.414\(f\)](#) should note this election as part of the budget and budget narrative portion of the application.

Indirect costs proposed under the award must be clearly identified as a separate budget line-item.

6. Format Requirements

All pages should be single-spaced and should be composed in at least 11-point font with one-inch margins. The total proposal shall not exceed 30 pages, including the project abstract, project narrative, literature cited, budget narrative, project timeline, and organizational structure. The following items are **not** included in the 30-page limit:

- Resumes/bios of key personnel
- Required forms (i.e., Standard Forms 424, CD-511, etc.)
- Letters of support and/or matching funds letters of commitment
- Letters of recommendation from entrepreneurs served by the applicant

Failure to follow these requirements may result in the rejection of the application. Any PDF or other attachments that are included in an electronic application must meet the above format requirement when printed.

C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant (unless the applicant is eligible for an exception under 2 CFR § 25.110) is required to:

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- **Register** in the System for Award Management (SAM), before applying.
- **Provide** a valid unique entity identifier in the application; and,
- **Continue** to maintain an active SAM registration with current information during the entire period that the applicant has an active Federal award or an application under consideration by MBDA (or any other Federal agency).

MBDA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time MBDA is ready to make the award, MBDA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

D. Submission Dates and Times

All proposals must be received on or before **March 17, 2025**, at 11:59:59 pm Eastern Standard Time (EST). Applications may be submitted starting from the publication date of this NOFO up to the deadline above. **Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered for funding. Applications must be submitted electronically via grants.gov.** The electronic submission will receive a date and time stamp and will be processed after it is fully uploaded. Applicants should anticipate receiving confirmation of successful submission within forty-eight (48) hours. It is imperative that applicants obtain this confirmation as proof of successful submission. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications as early as possible. **Waiting to apply at the end of the competition period puts an application at risk;** be sure to allow ample time.

In addition, please note the following:

- MBDA will not accept any unsolicited changes, additions, revisions, or deletions to applications after the submission deadline.
- Throughout the review and selection process, MBDA reserves the right to seek clarification from applicants whose applications are being reviewed and considered.
- Applicants may be asked to clarify objectives and work plans and modify budgets or other specifics as necessary to comply with federal requirements and provide supplemental information required by the agency before award.
- See **Section V** of this NOFO for application review and selection information.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to start early and not to wait until near the application deadline before logging on and reviewing the instructions for submitting an application through Grants.gov. Applicants should **SAVE AND PRINT WRITTEN PROOF** of an electronic submission made at Grants.gov. If problems occur while using Grants.gov, the applicant is advised to print any error message received and contact Grants.gov immediately. You can find contact information for Grants.gov on its website, including at <https://www.grants.gov/support> at the time of publication of this NOFO.

MBDA, in its sole discretion, may pre-approve in writing submission via an alternate method (e.g., email) due to a systems issue at Grants.gov only insofar as any such systems issue is beyond the control of the applicant. However, any submission via this alternate method must be received before the deadline. See **Section IV, part G** regarding what does and does not

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constitute a systems issue. **LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED for any reason**, including but not limited to late submissions caused by issues with Grants.gov, SAM, or AOR registrations. In situations described in this subsection, applications must have email or facsimile receipt timestamps no later than the application deadline or must be postmarked or the equivalent on or before the application deadline. **An application that is not timestamped or postmarked, as applicable, by the application deadline WILL NOT BE REVIEWED.**

Applicants are responsible for ensuring the completeness of their application.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

F. Funding Restrictions

The following activities and associated costs are not allowable under this Program. Such costs may not be charged to the Federal share or matching share of the award.

- **Construction:** Construction activities are not allowable under this program. For the purposes of an award made pursuant to this NOFO, construction includes any activity that disturbs the ground or modifies a structure.
- **Equity Investments & Loans:** The use of award funds for equity investments, loans, or grants to entrepreneurs or businesses is not allowable under this program. Thus, the cost of any equity investment, loan, or grant is not an allowable cost under an award. Neither Federal nor matching share funds may be invested in startups or other companies, whether through equity, debt, hybrid, or another mechanism. Similarly, services funded by Federal or matching share cannot be exchanged for equity or otherwise used as the basis for an equity stake in a company.
- **Scholarship Programs:** The use of award funds to pay a student's college or university tuition in the form of a scholarship or fellowship is not allowable under this Program. The cost of developing and implementing (e.g., paying the salaries of staff who review applications and conduct outreach) a scholarship program could be allowable under this Program. However, the actual payment of tuition dollars to fund individual scholarships or a pool of scholarships is not allowable under this Program.

G. Other Submission Requirements

To apply through Grants.gov, an applicant must register for a Grants.gov user ID and password. Note that this process can take between three to five business days or as long as four weeks if all steps are not completed correctly. The most up-to-date instructions for application submission via Grants.gov can be found at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>. Applicants already registered with Grants.gov do not need to re-register; however,

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all registered organizations must keep their System for Award Management (SAM) registration up to date through sam.gov or their applications will not be accepted by Grants.gov.

1. New Grants.gov Users

New Grants.gov users should note that the registration process can be lengthy, requires interaction with multiple organizations not affiliated with MBDA, and requires confirmation at each step. Applicants should register as organizations, not individuals. The process requires the applicant to appoint one or more Authorized Organization Representatives (AOR). The AORs registered at Grants.gov are the only officials with the authority to submit applications for an applicant. An applicant may authorize multiple AORs for Grants.gov. Below are instructions for registering as an organization:

- Obtain a UEI Number: To obtain the required Unique Entity Identifier, please go to [SAM.gov | Entity Registrations](#) to register. All applicants must have a UEI to do business with the Federal government.
- Register with SAM: Access <https://www.sam.gov>. The applicant needs to identify the authorizing official of its organization and an Employer Identification Number (EIN) (7-10 business days).
- Create Grants.gov Username and Password: Complete the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) profile and create a username and password. The applicant will need to use its organization's UEI number (same day).
- Authorize the AOR: Request approval, then the applicant's E-Biz POC must log in to Grants.gov to confirm the AOR (same day).
- Track AOR Status: Log in to Grants.gov and look at the Applicant welcome box for your status (same day).
- Download an application package: Use **Funding Opportunity Number MBDA-OBC-2025-1002156** and [Download a Grant Application Package](#) (same day).
- Complete your application package: Write your proposal and fill out ALL the required forms, fields, and certifications (allow 3 days).
- Submit your application package: Access your completed application package, ensure all the necessary information is entered, check the package for errors, then click the "Save & Submit" button on the cover page (3 days).
- Track my application package: Enter the tracking number you received after Step 8 and click the "Submit Tracking Numbers" button. Note, confirmation of successful submission may require 48 hours (allow 2 days).

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2. Electronic Submission

The electronic submission date is the date that applications have been submitted electronically and received by Grants.gov. Proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that www.Grants.gov receives your application. You must save and print the proof of submission from www.Grants.gov. If problems occur while using www.Grants.gov, the applicant is advised to (i) print any error message received and (ii) call www.Grants.gov at 1-800-518-4726 for immediate assistance.

The time it takes to completely upload an application will vary depending on several factors, including the size of the application, the speed of the applicant's Internet connection, and the time it takes Grants.gov to process the application. If Grants.gov rejects the application, the applicant must resubmit the entire application and receive a date and time stamp from Grants.gov. The Grants.gov time stamp will be considered the date and time of submission receipt. Before beginning to apply through Grants.gov, please review the application instructions posted at Grants.gov.

If you experience a grants.gov "systems issue" (technical problems or glitches with the grants.gov website) that you believe threatens your ability to complete a submission, you must (i) print any error message received and (ii) call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 for immediate assistance. Ensure that you obtain and document a case number regarding your communications with grants.gov. Please see above for the email submission method that you may use if you encounter technical issues with grants.gov. Please note in particular the requirement to provide documentation proving that you diligently attempted to submit your application via grants.gov.

Important note: Problems with an applicant organization's computer system or equipment are not considered "systems issues." Similarly, an applicant's failure to: (i) complete the required registration, (ii) ensure that a registered AOR submits the application, or (iii) receive an email message from grants.gov are not considered systems issues. A grants.gov "systems issue" is an issue occurring in connection with the operations of grants.gov system, such as the temporary loss of the service by grants.gov due to unexpected volume of traffic or failure of information technology systems, both of which are highly unlikely.

Confirmation of successful submission requires 48 hours. Applicants are advised to review the Grants.gov tutorial to minimize risk of an unsuccessful submission. Please visit <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101/getting-started-checklist.html>.

2. Application Review Information

Throughout the review and selection process, MBDA reserves the right to seek clarification and corrected or missing documents in writing from applicants whose applications are being reviewed. MBDA may additionally ask applicants to clarify application materials or modify budgets or other specifics necessary to comply with Federal requirements.

A. Evaluation Criteria

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Each application will be evaluated based on criteria included below. The number of points that can be earned for each category of criteria is listed below. A maximum total of 100 points may be earned for required criteria and up to an additional 10 bonus points may be earned points for MBDA strategic priority areas, for a maximum possible total of 110 points.

Summary of Evaluation Criteria		
1	Project Description	50 points
2	Applicant Capability	25 points
3	Project Objectives, Metrics, and Implementation	25 points
4	Bonus Points	10 points
Total Available Application Points		110 points

1. Project Description (50 points total)

This criterion considers the proposal's alignment with MBEs' needs and the geographic context in which the project will operate, the strength of the proposed activities under this Program, the proposal's alignment with at least two of the Program's Priority Areas (see Section I.A.), and the strength of the proposed partnerships. Accordingly, the proposal will be assessed on the following specific criteria:

- a. The proposal's clear identification of the geographic region where services will be provided *and* a demonstrated understanding – backed by data - of the populations and needs of MBEs in that region. (10 points)
- b. The strength of the applicant's approach to providing services, including a clear statement backed by evidence demonstrating the efficacy of the approach and any activities that will be used for implementation. (25 points)
- c. The strength of the proposal's strategy to leverage key stakeholders and partners to implement the project and accomplish the Program's objectives (other than driving participation in the project, see section immediately below). This criterion includes a clear identification of key stakeholders and a clear explanation of how the project will engage with those stakeholders and/or proposed partners. This criterion also includes the strength of the proposal's strategy to leverage and collaborate with existing programs in the geographic region, including those that support MBEs' access to capital (see Priority Area 1). If the applicant chooses to address Priority Area 3 (maximizing MBEs' access to business opportunities with the government), this criterion also includes the strength of the proposal's strategy to coordinate with relevant government programs. (10 points)
- d. The strength of the applicant's strategies to drive the participation of MBEs in the project, including a clear statement backed by numerical data demonstrating how the applicant's proposed activities and outreach strategy maximize the number of MBEs served. This element may include the strength of the proposed partnerships for this purpose (as illustrated through Letters of Commitment and/or memoranda of understanding) and the strength of the proposal's plan for outreach. (5 points)

2. Applicant Capability (25 points total)

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This criterion assesses whether the applicant has the resources and organizational capacity to execute their proposed project successfully, including the ability to manage a federal award and past experience with developing and implementing evidence-based curricula and entrepreneurial development programming.

- a. The clarity of the description of the organization and its commitment and success providing entrepreneurial development services or related services to MBEs. (6 points)
- b. The strength of the applicant's experience with the implementation of evidence-based program implementation. (7 points)
- c. The degree to which the applicant demonstrates a strong organizational capability to implement and manage a project of the scope and breadth proposed. This includes the overall financial stability of the organization as demonstrated by strong accounting systems, fiscal and administrative controls in place to properly manage federal funds, and previous grants management experience. (7 points)
- d. The strength of the applicant's personnel devoted to the project, including the qualifications and experience of key personnel and other staff assigned to significant roles and responsibilities proposed in the application, and an effective organizational structure consistent with successful implementation of the project. (5 points)

3. Project Performance and Start-up (25 points total)

This criterion considers the applicant's approach for collecting and utilizing data to manage performance and demonstrate impact; the congruity of proposed goals with the geographic area to be served; and the clarity with which it describes its plan to successfully implement key milestones.

- a. The strength of the Project Impact narrative (see section IV.B), including the clarity with which the applicant describes what the project will accomplish, the connection between the applicant's theory of change and its proposed activities, approach to data collection, and the system it will use to manage and synthesize client data. (5 points)
- b. The extent to which the applicant describes the full range of core performance measures (Clients Served, Capital Infusion, New Business Starts, Jobs Created and Retained, Percentage of Businesses Realizing Revenue Growth) and project specific performance measures (if applicable, e.g. Program Graduates) and how the proposed numerical goals align the project's theory of change. (5 points)
- c. The feasibility of the project's proposed goals, particularly whether the proposal demonstrates that the goals and activities are ambitious, realistic, achievable, and reasonable given the amount of funding requested by the proposal. (5 points)
- d. Clearly describes and justifies a sound plan for meeting the preliminary steps during the planning phase to ensure that the following key benchmarks are reached: hiring key staff, securing locations for operations, meeting with potential partners, and ensuring readiness for transferring or entering data to MBDA

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(10 points).

Bonus Points for MBDA Strategic Priorities

Under this NOFO, an applicant may be awarded a maximum of 10 bonus points for the following MBDA strategic priorities. An applicant may receive up to 5 points for each of the following categories. An applicant may receive points under multiple categories, but the total amount of bonus points an applicant receives will be capped at 10.

- **Providing services in geographic areas that are rural in nature.** Applicants who clearly explain in their proposal their demonstrated ability and/or plan for serving rural communities can receive up to five bonus points. Note: this category of bonus points does not encourage or require an applicant to propose *exclusively* serving rural communities; rather, this bonus point category recognizes that there are additional challenges to reaching and serving rural communities, and reviewers may award up to five bonus points to proposals that demonstrate an ability and plan to serve rural communities in addition to other MBEs. The number of points awarded will depend on the clarity and feasibility of the narrative and supporting documentation (if any). For this competition, rural and rural area have the same meaning as 7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13).
- **Providing childcare as a support for MBEs** – Childcare is key to inclusive economic equity. Applicants who provide free or subsidized childcare to program participants as a current or planned part of their organizational operations may receive up to five bonus points. For example, to qualify for this category, a project could demonstrate a plan to provide stipends for childcare or on-site childcare to enable entrepreneurs to attend classes as part of the project's curriculum. **Please note that Program funds cannot be used to fund childcare activities or stipends as part of the proposal or as an eligible activity.** This must be separate and apart from MBDA funding and must not be characterized as a non-federal cost share. The number of points awarded will depend on the clarity and feasibility of the narrative and supporting documentation (if any).
- **Supporting Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Related Industries.** Applicants who clearly explain their expertise in supporting IIJA or IRA-related businesses may receive up to five bonus points. Such industries would have a close nexus to infrastructure; construction; power infrastructure; climate related technologies or services; transportation; high-speed internet access; drinking and wastewater; water storage, efficiency and recycling; purification of water and soil or other environmental remediation activity; and ancillary services that serve these industries. The number of points awarded will depend on the clarity and feasibility of the narrative and supporting documentation (if any).
- **Implementing a place-based economic development strategy.** Applicants who clearly communicate a strategy to implement curricula that aligns with a place-based economic

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development strategy. Place based entrepreneurial development focuses on developing the skills of business owners within a specific geography by leveraging local and regional resources, addressing local challenges, and aligning business development with investments in infrastructure and workforce development. For this NOFO, this can be a strategy that impacts a subset(s) of the proposed geography to be served.

Total Available Bonus Points - up to a maximum of 10 points

All applications must adhere to the submission guidelines provided in this section. Omissions may result in disqualification of the entire *application*. The following are items that must be included with an application and failure to submit them may result in disqualification:

- Project Narrative
- Budget Narrative
- Required Standard Forms (SF) and Attachments

All project proposals that meet these minimum requirements will be evaluated, and an applicant will be scored based on how well the proposal addresses the evaluation criteria above.

B. Review and Selection Process

1. Initial Screening (Technical Review)

Prior to the formal review process, each application will receive an initial administrative screening to ensure that all required forms, signatures, and documents are present. An application may not be evaluated by the review panel if:

- a) The application is received after the closing date.
- b) The application package does not contain mandatory items (see Section IV. B).
- c) The project fails to address program objectives and priorities (see Section I).
- d) The applicant is not an eligible entity as defined by this NOFO.

MBDA, in its sole discretion, may continue review of applications with minor defects that may be easily rectified or cured.

2. Merit Review

Each responsive application will receive an independent, merit review by a panel (Merit Review Panel) qualified to evaluate the applications submitted based on the published evaluation criteria. The Merit Review Panel will consist of at least three (3) individuals. Each reviewer on the Merit Review Panel shall evaluate and provide an individual score for each proposal based on the criteria set out in this Section (see Application Review Information, above) for a maximum of 110

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points, including the Bonus Points. The Merit Review Panel may discuss the application(s) but will not provide a consensus on scores for each applicant.

MBDA, in its sole discretion, may use a statistical technique to normalize, aggregate, and group Merit Reviewers' quantitative evaluations (i.e., scores). Each application will receive a single score by averaging the scores of all reviewers for each application, taking into account statistical techniques described above, if applicable. During the review process, applicants may receive a written request from the MBDA program office to clarify items contained in the applicant's proposal. Applications that receive an overall average of 75 points or more are deemed meritorious and will be considered for funding. Applications receiving an average score of 60 to 74 points may be given a second consideration for funding if the panel requests additional information or clarification and if the applicant is able to respond to the panel's request for additional information/clarification within an allotted time. Thereafter, the merit review panel may rescore these applications and those applications that receive 75 points or more will be considered for funding. Applications that receive fewer than 60 points will not be considered for funding.

3. MBDA Selection Review Panel and Selection Factors

Proposals that receive 75 or more points will be passed to the Selection Review Panel, composed of no more than 5 Federal employees, for consideration. The Selection Review Panel will recommend a portfolio of proposals, from which the successful applications may be selected, and may take into consideration one or more of the following selection factors:

- The extent to which the application meets the overall objectives and priorities of the MBDA Women's Entrepreneurship Program as provided in Section I.A.
- The likelihood that the applicant will be able to develop and implement high-quality evidence-based curriculum in a way that benefits MBEs.
- Demonstrated ability to provide high quality technical assistance.
- The performance of the applicant under previous Federal financial assistance awards, as well as the performance of any third parties the applicant identifies who will carry out a substantial portion of the project.
- The availability of funds.
- The extent to which the application demonstrates an effective plan to ensure that MBEs benefit from available resources.
- The likelihood that the applicant and its proposed partners will be able to effectively engage with MBEs.
- The likelihood that the proposal will benefit the MBE business ecosystem in a lasting way (i.e., sustainability and lasting impact).

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- The extent to which the project supports MBDA's goals of balance in distribution of program funds within the overall portfolio of awards, including balance in geographic locations, type of institution, and business area or industry focus.
- The extent to which the proposal aligns with MBDA's mission.

In addition to considering the application and supporting documentation, the Selection Review Panel may rely upon publicly available information to inform its application of the selection factors. The Selection Review Panel will recommend a final portfolio of proposals for the Selecting Official.

The Selecting Official for this award makes the final recommendation regarding the funding of applications under this NOFO. The Selecting Official retains discretion to select and recommend an application for funding that was not recommended by the selection review panel based on one or more of the selection factors enumerated above.

Prior to making a final recommendation for funding to the Grants Officer, MBDA may conduct negotiations with an applicant regarding the elements of the application and/or may request that the applicant provide written clarifications regarding its application.

There is no appeal process for denied applications.

C. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

The anticipated time for processing awards is approximately 150 days from the receipt of applications. MBDA anticipates that the awards under this NOFO will be made with a start date of August 1, 2025. Successful applicants may be eligible for pre-award costs (see 2 CFR § [200.458](#)).

3. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The Notice of Award (CD-450) (or its successor) is executed by the NIST Financial Assistance Agreements Management Office (FAAMO) through the Grants Management Information System (GMIS) electronic grants management system (or its successor) to the Authorized Representative of the recipient organization. The Notice of Award will include the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions and any other required Specific Award Conditions. The Authorized Representative will receive instructions from MBDA on how to access the GMIS system to accept the award.

MBDA will notify unsuccessful applicants, in writing, after final selections have been made and after all offers have been accepted. Those applications that are not ultimately selected for funding will be retained by MBDA for a period of three (3) years after which they will be destroyed.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. *Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements For Grants And Cooperative Agreements* – The *Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements*, published in the Federal Register on December 30, 2014, effective December 26, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at:
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2014/12/30/2014-30297/department-of-commerce-pre-award-notification-requirements-for-grants-and-cooperative-agreements>
2. Awards made under this NOFO are subject to the *Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions*. This document will be incorporated by reference in the award package. This document can be found at:
https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%2012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf. Successful applicants may also be required to agree to additional Specific Award Conditions as a condition of funding. These conditions will be provided in the award package.
3. *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements*: Through 2 CFR § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 CFR Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.
4. *Review of Risk*: After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the NIST FAAMO will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under [2 CFR 200.206](#). These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to SAM.gov Responsibility/Qualification, which replaced the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) as the OMB-designed integrity and performance system, about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency.
5. *U.S. Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General*: The U.S. Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General (OIG) seeks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department's programs, including deterring and detecting fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement. The OIG accomplishes this mission primarily through

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investigations, audits, and inspections of Department activities, including grants, cooperative agreements, loans, and contracts.

a. Disclosures:

Recipients of financial assistance originating from the U.S. Department of Commerce, including MBDA, shall timely disclose, in writing, to the OIG and awarding agency, whenever, in connection with the award, performance, or closeout of this grant or sub-award thereunder, the recipient has credible evidence that a principal, employee, agent, or sub-recipient has committed:

- (i) A violation of federal criminal law involving fraud, conflict of interest, bribery, or gratuity violations found in Title 18 of the United States Code; or
- (ii) A violation of the civil False Claims Act (31 U.S.C. §§ 3729-3733).

b. Reporting:

The OIG maintains a hotline to receive allegations of fraud, waste, or abuse. To report such allegations, please visit <https://www.oig.doc.gov/Pages/Hotline.aspx>. Upon request, the OIG will take appropriate measures to protect the identity of any individual who reports misconduct, as authorized by the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. Reports to the OIG may also be made anonymously.

c. Whistleblower Protection:

Recipients, sub-recipients, and employees working on this grant award will be subject to the whistleblower rights and remedies established under 41 U.S.C. § 4712.

An employee of a recipient or sub-recipient may not be discharged, demoted, or otherwise discriminated against as a reprisal for disclosing information that the employee reasonably believes is evidence of: gross mismanagement of a federal contract or award; a gross waste of federal funds; an abuse of authority (i.e., an arbitrary and capricious exercise of authority that is inconsistent with the mission of MBDA or the U.S. Department of Commerce or the successful performance of a contract or grant awarded by MBDA or the Department) relating to a federal contract or award; a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety; or a violation of a law, rule, or regulation related to a federal contract (including the competition for or negotiation of a contract) or grant.

The recipient or sub-recipient shall inform its employees and contractors, in writing, in the predominant language of the workforce or organization, of employee whistleblower rights and protections under 41 U.S.C. § 4712, as described above and at <https://www.oig.doc.gov/Pages/Whistleblower-Protection-Program.aspx>.

C. Reporting

1. Reviews

MBDA may, in its sole discretion, conduct an operational assessment three months after the award date of the project, and thereafter as determined by MBDA. MBDA will conduct performance assessments every six months, or at any time MBDA determines necessary, to determine progress made toward achievement of performance targets. These assessments may be conducted in-person onsite at the project or virtually. Projects will be monitored throughout the funding award period and there will be ongoing communication with key project staff. As such, awardees will be required to provide data and outcomes for participants. The level of monitoring will be at MBDA's sole discretion.

2. Reporting Requirements

The project is required to provide the following reports using the systems and format required by MBDA. Additional guidance will be provided to successful applicants during the post-award process.

- a) *Financial Reports* – The financial report shall include details on the use of Federal funds and contributions of non-Federal funds (if proposed). The financial reports are to be submitted electronically on a periodic basis using the SF-425 form. The financial reports are due thirty (30) days after the end of the initial six-month period and every six-month period thereafter. The final report for each budget year is due within (30) days after the expiration of that year.
- b) *Progress Reports* – Progress reports are to be via the system of record on a periodic basis. The periodic reports are due 30 days after the end of the initial six-month period and every six-month period thereafter. The final report is due within ninety (30) days after the expiration of each budget year.

The periodic reports must include data and information to determine project progression and success. MBDA will rely on these reports, data, and information as evidence for success stories, future program design, policy recommendations, and/or statistical purposes.

Note: Failure to submit reports in a timely manner may result in MBDA award enforcement and/or delayed and/or terminated access to Federal funds.

- c) *Ongoing Data Reporting* - All required project data reporting to MBDA shall be conducted via the Internet using a Performance System to be designated. Guidance regarding the form and frequency of data collection will be provided by MBDA and will be aligned with MBDA needs, including but not limited to the planned

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comprehensive evaluation of the Program. Data for a quarter must be submitted within 15 days after the end of the quarter being reported.

- d) *Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 Reporting* - The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS), available at www.FSRS.gov, or its successor on all sub-awards over \$30,000. Please see the OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 170 and 200, which can be accessed at http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200_main_02.tpl.
- e) *Operational assessment input* – The project is required to provide information as requested by MBDA related to the project's operational status, including but not limited to branding, website, hiring and training of staff, office space, and compliance with information technology requirements.

4. Agency Contact(s)

Prospective applicants may contact:
Ms. Nakita Chambers
Director, Office of Grants Administration
Minority Business Development Agency
U.S. Department of Commerce
Email: WEP@mbda.gov
Tel: 202-579-9802

For all questions regarding this NOFO, prospective applicants should email WEP@mbda.gov. Direct replies to applicants generally are prohibited to avoid giving an unfair advantage to any applicant. MBDA may answer questions received through updates to its FAQs posted to mbda.gov.

5. Other Information

A. Conferences

1. Pre-Application Webinars

MBDA will conduct a series of pre-application technical assistance webinars with focus areas noted below. These webinars are designed to help prospective applicants understand MBDA's Women's Entrepreneurship Program and to assist applicants to prepare competitive grant applications. The webinars will cover the following topics:

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- Competition Overview, Program Priorities and Objectives, Key Dates, Application Review Criteria, Budget pitfalls to avoid and best practices, Measuring success and performance

MBDA may also announce and hold additional webinars during the competition period. Dates and times for the webinars will be posted on the MBDA's webpage. Participants must register at least 24 hours in advance of the teleconference. Please visit the MBDA website at www.mbda.gov to register and view recordings of the webinars, as well as other competition information.

MBDA will post responses to questions in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on its website to respond to questions. The FAQ will be updated regularly throughout the application period. Webinar participants can submit questions for possible MBDA inclusion in the FAQs. In addition, applicants may send questions to MBDA via email at wep@mbda.gov. Please note that MBDA will not provide individual responses to questions.

2. Post-Award Webinar

Awardees will be required to attend a post-award virtual conference (webinar) conducted by MBDA to ensure that awardees have a clear understanding of the project award, terms, conditions, and expectations. During the post-award webinar, MBDA will orient the awardees and key project staff on the purpose and goals of the Program, explain project reporting requirements and procedures, identify available Federal resources that can enhance the capabilities of the project, and provide detailed information about MBDA and other relevant Federal resources, branding and logo requirements, and other online systems the recipient will use during the period of performance. Awardees will receive a license to use MBDA Women's Entrepreneurship Program trademarks, program naming requirements, and a branding guide.

3. MBDA Women's Entrepreneurship Program Implementation Meeting

In the first year of the award, awardees will be required to attend the National MBDA WEP Program Implementation Meeting in person. MBDA will provide this forum to kick off the program. The meeting will feature learning opportunities, keynote speakers, workshops, and other training elements that inform attendees of new opportunities and information related to program implementation. Applicants must include expenses to accommodate two (2) individuals, one of whom should be the project director/principal investigator, to travel to the Implementation Meeting in Washington, DC in the proposed budget.

4. Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week

Each year of the award, awardees may be required to attend MED Week, a 4-day annual event. Applicants must budget for up to two (2) individuals, one of whom should be the project

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director, to travel to MED Week in the proposed budget. Applicants may also budget for a program participant to attend MED Week as well, subject to input and approval from MBDA. The location of MED Week may vary each year. To estimate expenses, applicants should use Washington, DC as the location. MBDA will notify applicants each year no later than two months in advance of MED Week whether in-person attendance is required or whether virtual attendance is permissible. If virtual attendance is permissible, applicants will be allowed to reallocate the associated travel budget items to other line items.

5. MBDA's National Training Conference (NTC)

Each year of the award, awardees may be required to attend MBDA's National Training Conference, a 4-day annual event. Applicants must include expenses to accommodate two (2) individuals, one of whom should be the project director, to travel to NTC in the proposed budget. The location of the NTC may vary each year. To estimate expenses, applicants should use Washington, DC as the location. MBDA will notify applicants each year no later than two months in advance of the NTC whether in-person attendance is required or whether virtual attendance is permissible. If virtual attendance is permissible, applicants will be allowed to reallocate the associated travel budget items to other line items.

6. Grants Management Workshop

The recipient will also be required to attend one or more virtual Grants Management Workshops facilitated by DOC and/or MBDA's financial management team, unless otherwise noted by MBDA. Workshops are designed to review key Financial Assistance requirements from MBDA and NIST Financial Assistance and Agreements Management Office (FAAMO).

B. Collaboration with MBDA

As part of the cooperative agreement, MBDA shall work collaboratively with each award recipient to serve the MBE community. Collaboration with MBDA will include items such as: issuance and adherence to the Program guidelines, Grantee site visits, promotion of MBDA-sanctioned events and conferences, annual nomination of MBEs for MBDA recognition, submission of project success stories and/or profiles for MBDA social media promotion, and co-promotion of project-led and MBDA-led activities.

MBDA expects to further support awardees under this Program by:

- Providing the brand identity for MBDA WEP Program's projects to include Program name, logo, branding guidelines, naming conventions, and templates for collateral materials. Awardees will receive a license to use MBDA WEP Program trademarks to facilitate required branding. Awardees **must** maintain a project-specific webpage and follow MBDA branding requirements, including requirements related to program name, program website, and social media use.

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- Assistance with facilitating and fostering relationships as well as understanding the mechanics around how to work with a range of key public and private sector stakeholders at the local, state, and Federal levels and private sector.
- Assigning program staff to support programs with:
 - Project monitoring and advisement
 - Maintaining performance scorecards and dashboards
 - Providing program information, guidance, and support
- Providing support related to the Department of Commerce electronic grants system, if necessary.
- Providing strategic subject matter and ecosystem expertise, including updated information about federal programs that support small and medium size enterprises.
- Coordinating and participating in a national evaluation of the WEP Program. Awardees are required to cooperate with all site visits and evaluation activities conducted by or funded by MBDA or the Department of Commerce.
- Providing support that fosters collaboration amongst the MBDA national network, including MBDA Business Centers, programs, initiatives and pilot programs.
- Fostering collaboration with DOC and other federal government programs, as appropriate.

C. Past Performance and Non-Compliance with Award Provisions

Unsatisfactory performance under prior Federal awards may result in an application not being considered for funding. Per [2 C.F.R. § 200.339](#), failure to comply with any or all of the provisions of an award – including but not limited to mismanagement or misuse of funds – may have a negative impact on future funding by the Department of Commerce (or any of its operating units) and may be considered grounds for any or all of the following remedies for noncompliance: establishment of an account receivable, withholding payments under any Department of Commerce awards to the recipient, disallowing all or part of the cost of the project or action not in compliance, changing the method of payment from advance to reimbursement only, imposition of other special award conditions, suspension or termination of any active Department of Commerce awards.

D. Limitation of Liability

Funding for awards listed in this NOFO is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. In no event will MBDA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for preparation costs for the Applicant's proposal. Publication of this NOFO does not

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obligate MBDA or the Department of Commerce to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

E. Audit Costs

Audits shall be performed in accordance with audit requirements contained in the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements found in [2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F](#). Recipients expending \$1,000,000 or more in Federal funds during the recipient's fiscal period must conduct a single audit in accordance with guidelines outlined in 2 CFR §§ 200.500-.520. For-profit organizations not covered by the audit requirements in 2 CFR §§ 200.500-.520 are subject to the audit requirements set forth in the terms and conditions of the award. Recipients that expend less than \$1,000,000 during the recipient's fiscal year in Federal awards are exempt from Federal audit requirements for that year, except as noted in 2 CFR § 200.503, but records must be available for review or audit by appropriate officials of the Federal agency, pass-through entity, and Government Accountability Office (GAO). Applicants are also reminded that other audits may be conducted by the Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General and by other authorized Federal agencies.

F. Right to Use Information

The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance, and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce—either through its staff or by hiring a third party—in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed, and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, Federal agents, and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate confidentiality and nondisclosure agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner and by cooperating with Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award. Additional terms and conditions on this topic may be included as a condition of funding.

G. Freedom of Information Act Disclosure

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Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at [15 C.F.R. Subtitle A, Part 4, Disclosure of Government Information](#). These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be subject to requests for release under FOIA. If an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.

H. NOFO Changes Communicated on Grants.gov

MBDA may make changes or additions to this NOFO. All changes will be communicated on Grants.gov. It is recommended that applicants set up a Grants.gov account and subscribe to this funding opportunity ("MBDA-OBC-2025-1002156") in order to be notified of any updates or changes. DOC or MBDA may cancel, modify, or withdraw this NOFO at any time. MBDA is not obligated to make any Federal award or commitment as a result of this announcement.

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

1. **Capital Infusion-** Capital infusion includes all forms of capital debt and/or investments from all sources (i.e., lines of credit, consumer debt products used specifically for the business, angel investors, owner's capital contributions, etc.). Credit lines and other revolving debt facilities/instruments such as credit cards are to be recognized for the full amount of the line of credit when established and not to be based on individual drawdowns.
2. **Clients Served-** Number of unique clients counseled and/or trained. Counted as a count of unique program participants with a reported counseling session or training in the time period indicated.
3. **Jobs Supported-** Jobs that are directly or indirectly generated or retained with assistance from the Recipient. Jobs created includes the business owners(s) who are employed in the business.
4. **Measures-** quantifiable indicators used to determine if a project or program is achieving its desired objectives.
5. **Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) -** a business enterprise— (i) that is not less than 51 percent-owned by 1 or more socially or economically disadvantaged individuals; and (ii) the management and daily business operations of which are controlled by 1 or more socially or economically disadvantaged individuals. (see 15 U.S.C. 9501(9)).
6. **New Business Starts-** A new business start is realized when after enrollment a client served has completed required registration(s), if applicable, with the local, state, and/or Federal Government (e.g., DBA registration, get a business license, agency issued tax identifications, etc.) AND at least one of the following:
 - Has documented a transaction from the sale of a product or professional or personal service for the purpose of gain or profit; or
 - Has contracted for or compensated an employee(s) or independent contractor(s) to perform essential business functions; or
 - Has acquired debt or equity capital to pursue business operations (e.g., to purchase inventory, equipment, building, business, etc.); or
 - Has incurred business expenses in the operation of a business.
7. **Notice of Award -** The official document, signed (or the electronic equivalent of signature) by a Grants Management Officer that:
 - a. Notifies the Recipient of the award of a grant;
 - b. Contains or references all the Terms and Conditions of the grant and Federal funding limits and obligations; and
 - c. Provides the documentary basis for recording the obligation of Federal funds in the MBDA accounting system.

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8. Percentage of Businesses Realizing Revenue Growth – Individual business revenue increased from recent 12-month period to next 12-month period. Most recent 12-month period of revenue is compared to revenue reported from previous 12-month period. Number of observations with a positive result are divided by the total number of observations.
9. Program – The MBDA Women's Entrepreneurship Program
10. Project – a successful applicant's implementation of its proposal that was selected for funding under this Program. Multiple projects will operate under the MBDA Women's Entrepreneurship Program.
11. Project Period - The total period of performance for an award made under this Funding Opportunity.
12. Recipient - An Organization that has had its application accepted and has been awarded funding under this Funding Opportunity.
13. Targets- defined as the anticipated number of clients you will serve, business starts will be realized, jobs supported, jobs created and retained, and the dollar value of capital acquired.
14. Technical Assistance - Counseling or training services provided to an individual and/or business in accordance with the terms of this Funding Opportunity and a Recipient's Notice of Award.
15. Technology Transfer- The process of transitioning results that emerge from scientific and technological activity to the marketplace and to wider society, along with associated skills and procedures.
16. Training- A workshop or seminar during which staff of the recipient and/or an affiliated third party actively delivers the curricula developed under this Funding Opportunity. Training can in person or virtual.

APPENDIX B: PROJECT ABSTRACT SAMPLE

At a minimum, the project abstract page must provide the applicant's name, address, telephone number, email address, date of submission, and the Funding Opportunity Number. Applicants should also provide the following additional information: the project title, total budget, and the names, affiliations, complete mailing addresses, email addresses, and telephone numbers of all key persons affiliated with the proposal.

PROJECT ABSTRACT

APPLICANT NAME:

APPLICANT ADDRESS:

APPLICANT TELEPHONE NUMBER:

NAME FOR PRIMARY CONTACT:

EMAIL ADDRESS FOR PRIMARY CONTACT:

PROPOSED PROJECT TITLE:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (NO MORE THAN 250 WORDS):

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT GOALS (the intended impact and what the applicant hopes to accomplish):

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE:

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER:

TOTAL FEDERAL FUNDING REQUESTED:

NAME (S) AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR KEY PROJECT PERSONNEL

APPENDIX C: REQUIRED PERFORMANCE MEASURES, GOALS, AND DEFINITIONS

The following are the four required measures, goals, and definitions under the Program. For each required measure, the applicant must propose specific numeric targets that the applicant proposes to reach, broken out by year and quarter. These numeric targets will form the basis for MBDA's assessment of successful applicants' performance under their projects throughout the project performance period.

Required Measure	Definition
Clients Served	Total number of unique clients receiving training or counseling services during a specific period. If a client had at least one counseling or training session during the period, the client will be counted as one unique client served.
New Business Starts	<p>A new business start is realized when after enrollment a client served has completed required registration(s), if applicable, with the local, state, and/or Federal Government (e.g., DBA registration, get a business license, agency issued tax identifications, etc.) AND at least one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has documented a transaction from the sale of a product or professional or personal service for the purpose of gain or profit; or ▪ Has contracted for or compensated an employee(s) or independent contractor(s) to perform essential business functions; or ▪ Has acquired debt or equity capital to pursue business operations (e.g., to purchase inventory, equipment, building, business, etc.); or ▪ Has incurred business expenses in the operation of a business.
Capital Infusion	Capital infusion includes all forms of capital debt and/or investments from all sources (i.e., lines of credit, consumer debt products used specifically for the business, angel investors, owner's capital contributions, etc.). Credit lines and other revolving debt facilities/instruments such as credit cards are to be recognized for the full amount of the line of credit when established and not to be based on individual drawdowns.
Jobs Created and Retained	Jobs that are directly or indirectly generated or retained with assistance from the Recipient. Jobs created includes the business owners(s) who are employed in the business.

OPTIONAL PROJECT-SPECIFIC MEASURES

Project-specific measures are those logically connected to the overall goal of the project and its activities. Applicants are encouraged to propose and collect project-specific measures, but these project-specific measures and associated numeric targets are optional.