

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

FULL TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT

Federal Agency Name: U.S. Department of Commerce, Minority Business Development Agency

Funding Opportunity Title: MBDA Business Center Program

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

FFO Number: MBDA-OB-2016-2004579

CFDA Number: 11.805 MBDA Business Center Program

Funding Instrument: Cooperative Agreement¹

Funding Amount: Funding has not been appropriated, but we expect a total of \$1,540,225 in FY 2016 funds to be available. We also expect \$1,540,225 per year for continued funding of this program through FY 2021.

Closing Date for Submissions: A completed application must be transmitted and time-stamped at www.Grants.gov no later than **11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) on December 21, 2015**. Applications received after the closing date will not be considered.

Funding Opportunity Description: This Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO or Announcement) announces the anticipated availability of funding for the MBDA Business Center (“Center”) program, and solicits competitive applications for operators of MBDA Business Centers in (5) five locations. MBDA Business Centers are established to provide technical assistance and business development services. The technical assistance and business development services are provided through federal financial assistance awards to generate increased financing and contract opportunities for minority business enterprises (MBEs). In addition, the services provided will assist MBEs in creating and retaining jobs.

Pre-Application Teleconference: MBDA will conduct a pre-application teleconference on – November 2, 2015. The time of the pre-application teleconference has yet to be determined. Participants must register at least 24 hours in advance of the teleconference. Please visit the MBDA Internet Portal at www.mbda.gov for more information.

¹ A cooperative agreement is the funding instrument used when there will be substantial Federal Government programmatic involvement. Substantial involvement means that, after award, MBDA program staff will assist, guide, coordinate, or participate in Center activities. This FFO is not to start or to expand an individual business. Applications must be submitted for the operation of an MBDA Business Center that will provide business development services to eligible minority-owned firms as set forth in this Announcement. Applications that do not meet these requirements will not be considered.

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SECTION I: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Program Overview

MBDA Business Centers provide technical assistance and business development services to minority business enterprises (MBEs). In accordance with Executive Order 11625 and 15 U.S.C. § 1512, MBDA is soliciting competitive applications from eligible organizations for the operation of MBDA Business Centers. MBDA will award five (5) individual cooperative agreements pursuant to this Announcement in the following metropolitan areas:

COMPETITION ID 2553674 Baltimore, MD	COMPETITION ID 2568627 Boston, MA	COMPETITION ID 2568629 Manhattan, NY
COMPETITION ID 2568631 Pasadena, CA	COMPETITION ID 2568633 St. Louis, MO	

The applicant may propose the physical location of the center in the metropolitan area as noted above. Alternatively, the applicant may propose the location of the center in an area adjacent to the noted metropolitan area above.

B. Introduction

The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), a bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce, leads Federal Government efforts to promote the growth and global competitiveness of America's growing minority business enterprise (MBE) community. Through MBDA's services, MBEs are better equipped to create jobs, contribute to local economies, and sustain America's position as a world economic leader. Today, MBEs number more than 7.9 million and generate over \$1.6 trillion in revenues. Minority-owned firms are consistently cited by economists as an engine of employment growth and economic expansion in America.

The MBDA Business Center program, a key component of the Agency's overall portfolio of minority business development services, focuses on securing domestic public and/or private contracts and financing transactions, exports, and job creation for "eligible minority-owned businesses." Organizations that are owned or controlled by the following persons or groups of persons are eligible to receive technical business assistance services from the MBDA Business Center Program: African American, Hispanic American, American Asian and Pacific Islander, Native American (including Alaska Natives, Alaska Native Corporations and Tribal entities), Asian Indian American, and Hasidic Jewish Americans. See 15 C.F.R. §1400.1, 1400.2 and Executive Order 11625.

The services are designed to assist MBE clients with achieving higher levels of growth and competitiveness. While Centers serve all MBEs target clients are (1) firms with annual revenues of over \$1,000,000; (2) firms involved in high-growth industries (*e.g.*, green technology, clean energy, health care, IT, infrastructure and broadband technology, among others); or (3) firms with rapid growth potential (see Appendix D: Definitions of Key Terms).²

² Start-up and/or micro firms will be served by the MBDA Business Center program via strategic partnership referrals

Promoting the success of MBEs is anticipated to have a significant impact on employment and the tax base in their communities, and positive economic impact throughout the nation.

C. Program Objective

The primary drivers of the Business Center program are: (i) capacity building, and (ii) job creation/retention resulting from facilitating contracts and financing for medium-sized minority businesses. MBDA Centers provide technical business services including (but not limited to) the development of a pool of contract and finance opportunities; direct matching of opportunities with qualified/vetted MBEs; relationship management and deal sourcing initiatives (e.g. industry clusters); facilitating MBE growth through exports (identifying global markets and financing); identifying, matching and securing alternative sources of capital and financing; educating MBEs on the benefits of strategic growth alternatives (e.g., mergers, acquisitions and/or joint ventures); MBE advocacy; and providing service referrals to MBEs of all sizes.

Each Center is required to work collaboratively with all MBDA Business Centers and other MBDA sponsored projects (“Network”). Each Center will engage the Network and offer its services to assisting MBE clients through Network collaboration.

D. Program Authority

MBDA is authorized, in accordance with Executive Order 11625 and 15 U.S.C. § 1512, to solicit competitive applications from eligible organizations for the Minority Business Development Agency Business Center program.

SECTION II: AWARD INFORMATION

A. Funding Availability

The total funding period for the awards made under this solicitation is three (3) base years and two (2) optional years. Funding for this program has not yet been appropriated, but we expect a total of \$1,540,225 per year to fund the financial assistance awards for the operation of MBDA Business Centers identified in this FFO through FY 2021. The anticipated amount of the federal funding for each Center being competed under this FFO for each of the program years is listed (see Appendix A: Funding Availability by Center Location).

Each award is expected to range from \$285,400 to \$321,800 per year. The federal share of funding levels is based at \$250,000 plus locality adjustments. The locations of the Centers are based on the size and ranking of minority populations in each metropolitan statistical area (MSA), the overall number of minority firms in MSAs (as established by U.S. Census Bureau data), and other available research and data.

Applicants requesting renewal of existing projects are eligible to apply for new awards under this announcement.

The minimum non-federal cost sharing requirements under the MBDA Business Center program are discussed in the FFO (see Section II.D —Non-Federal Cost Share Requirement).

The funding periods and funding amounts referenced in this FFO are subject to the availability of appropriated funds, as well as Department of Commerce and MBDA priorities at the time of award. Neither the Department of Commerce nor MBDA may be held responsible for proposal preparation costs. All funding periods under the award are subject to the availability of funds to support the continuation of the project. Publication of this FFO does not obligate the Department of Commerce or MBDA to award any specific cooperative agreement or to obligate all or any part of available funds.

Federal funds must be fully expended by the Center operator during each funding period and are not permitted to be carried-over to subsequent funding periods. The Center operator's failure to fully expend annual federal award funds for purposes related to the Business Center program may result in programmatic enforcement or termination of federal funding allocated by MBDA to subsequent funding periods under the award.

B. Period of Performance

Awards are anticipated to be made with a start date of September 1, 2016. The period of performance under this solicitation is five years, consisting of one base period (three consecutive program years) and optional (two program years) periods. **Applicants must submit one budget (Form SF-424A) and corresponding budget narrative for each year**, including the two optional program years. MBDA may approve funding for a Center in years two through three if the Center is operating at a "Commendable" or "Outstanding" performance level at the time during the current program year that MBDA makes its recommendations to the Grants Officer for continuation funding for the next program year. A Center operator with a performance rating of "Good" or lower will not qualify for automatic renewal, but the award terms and conditions will be subject to renegotiation and special award

conditions for the next funding period at the discretion of MBDA, and subject to the approval of the Grants Officer.

Recommendations for continued funding are generally evaluated by MBDA based on the mid-year performance rating and/or a combination of the mid-year and cumulative third quarter performance ratings for the current performance year. MBDA and the Department of Commerce will consider all the facts and circumstances of each case, such as, but not limited to, market conditions, most recent performance of the Center and any mitigating circumstances.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Financial assistance awards in the form of *cooperative agreements* will be used to fund the MBDA Business Center program. MBDA shall maintain substantial involvement with the Center operator and Center staff throughout the award period. The substantial involvement will include a post-award conference, training, and advisement, in addition to work coordination and collaboration with MBDA and other MBDA funded programs, project monitoring, and administrative and reporting requirements (*see below*, section VI.B and VI.D, Federal Award Administration Information).

D. Notification of Award

Anticipated time for processing awards is approximately two hundred (200) days from the closing date for receipt of applications. MBDA anticipates awards will be made with a start date of September 1, 2016.

SECTION III: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

For-profit entities (including but not limited to sole-proprietorships, partnerships, limited liability companies and corporations), non-profit organizations, state and local government entities, Native American Tribes and educational institutions are eligible to apply to operate MBDA Business Centers.

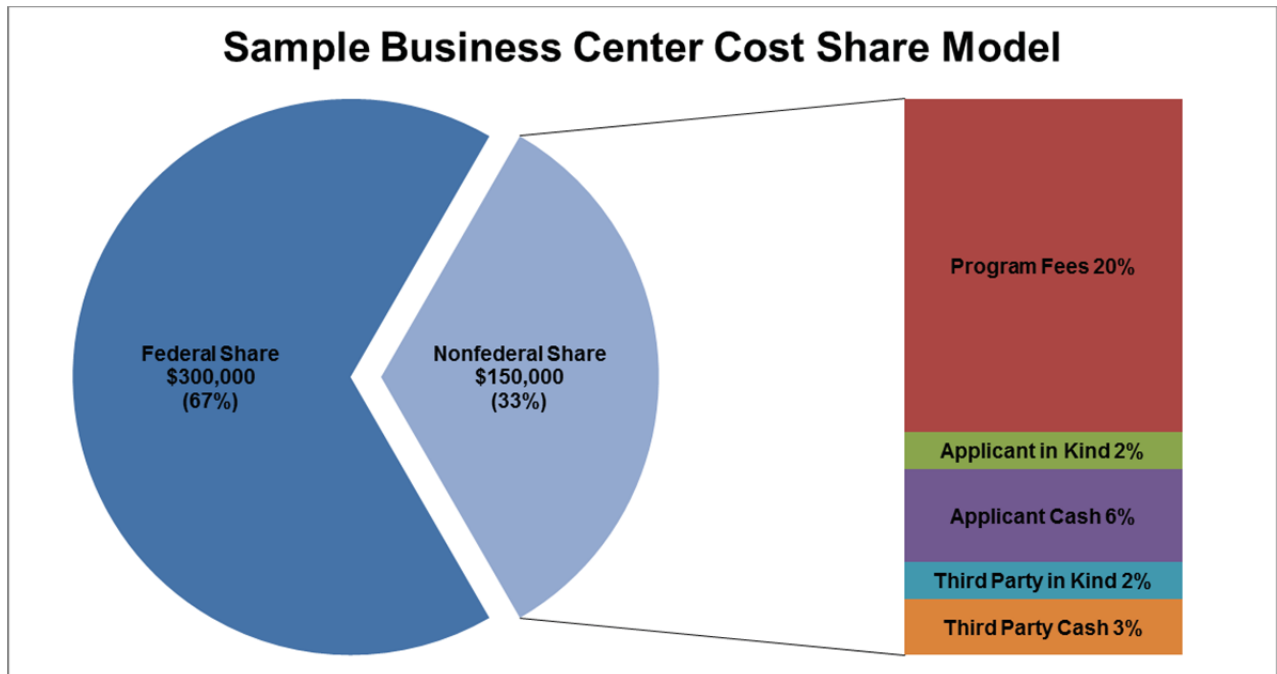
Successful applicants will possess experience in assisting minority firms in obtaining large scale contracts/procurements and financing awards; accessing established supply chains; educating and assisting minority firms in joint ventures, teaming arrangements, mergers and acquisitions; minority business advocacy; and, facilitating entry and large scale transactions in global markets. It is also anticipated that the mission of successful applicant organizations will align with both the mission of MBDA and the MBDA Business Center program objectives.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

“Cost sharing or matching” is the portion of project costs not paid by Federal funds; these costs are provided by the Center operator or Center as direct or in-kind contributions. These costs are not borne by the Federal Government, or other federal awards or grants unless allowed by statute. Beyond the required generation of program income, applicants may contribute additional non-federal cost share to the award by one or more of the following methods: (1) applicant cash contributions; (2) applicant in-kind (i.e., non-cash) contributions; or (3) third-party cash or in-kind contributions (including a state or local grant or other form of support for the project). All cost sharing or matching must be consistent with the requirements of 2 CFR §200.306.

Each Center shall have a minimum of 33% (of estimated total) non-federal cost share under the MBDA Business Center program (see Appendix A: Funding Availability by Center Location.) Additionally, cost sharing or matching through the generation of “program income” is mandatory. Applicants may propose non-federal cost share beyond the minimum requirement. Applicants who propose non-federal cost share in excess of the minimum 33% will receive bonus points under the competitive evaluation process (see Section V-3. Bonus Points – Non-Federal Cost Share in Excess Minimum).

The Center program is a fee-for-service program and the Center operator is required to generate “program income” through the collection of client fees, membership fees, success fees and/or other fee structures proposed by the applicant. All proposed fee structures must be acceptable to MBDA, approved by the Grants Officer, and consistent with the requirements for cost sharing and matching in 2 CFR §200.306. Program income identified by the applicant in the applicant’s proposed budget and approved by the Grants Officer must be applied directly to the Center’s non-federal cost share and must be used in furtherance of program objectives. In addition, for each funding period under the award, the Center operator will be required to contribute cash or another acceptable form of non-federal cost share to the award to compensate for uncollected program income that was included in the approved Center budget.



If the Center generates more program income during a funding period than is allocated to the award's non-federal cost share for such funding period, the excess program income must be used by the Center operator in furtherance of eligible Center objectives. Subject to written approval by the Grants Officer, program income generated by the Center that cannot be expended during the funding period in which it is earned may be carried forward by the Center operator for one year and expended only in furtherance of program objectives in the award's next subsequent funding period.

However, the Center operator may not apply excess program income generated during one funding period to prior program funding periods to fund non-federal cost share shortfalls. In addition, program income that is not (1) expended in furtherance of project objectives, (2) carried forward for expenditure in the succeeding funding period with written approval of the Grants Officer, or (3) used for completion of the work by the end of the overall award period will be deducted from the project's total allowable cost. The Center operator may be required to reimburse MBDA for some, or all, of the federal share disbursed to the Center operator under the award if any of the aforementioned circumstances occur (see Section IV – I. Proposed Budget and Budget Narrative).

SECTION IV: APPLICATION SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Application Overview

Please make sure to begin registration early, as the process takes between three business days and three weeks. Before applying for a funding opportunity, your organization needs to register with Grants.gov, and assign one or more Authorized Organization Representatives (AOR). We recognize registration activities may take extra time, but this is part of the security process the U.S. Government must use to prevent fraud and abuse of funds. If you do not complete your registration by the submission deadline, you will not be allowed to submit an application. The Grants.gov application process is outlined below.

- 1 **Obtain a DUNS Number.** Call 1-866-705-5711 or access the Dun & Bradstreet website <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. (1-2 business days).
- 2 **Register with SAM.** Access <https://www.sam.gov>. You'll also need the authorizing official of your organization and an Employer Identification Number (EIN). (7-10 business days)
- 3 **Create Grants.gov Username and Password.** Complete your Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) profile and [create your username and password](#). You'll need to use your organization's DUNS Number. (same day)
- 4 **Authorize the AOR.** Request approval, then your organization's E-Biz POC must log in to Grants.gov to confirm you as an AOR. (same day)
- 5 **Track AOR Status.** Log in to Grants.gov and look at the Applicant Center welcome box for your current status. (same day)
- 6 **Download an application package.** Use Funding Opportunity Number **MBDA-OB-2016-2004579** and [Download a Grant Application Package](#). (same day)
- 7 **Complete your application package.** Write your proposal and fill out ALL the required forms, fields, and certifications. (allow 3 days)
- 8 **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)
- 9 **Track my application package.** Enter the tracking number you received after Step 8 and click the "Submit Tracking Number(s)" button.

B. Application Package

All application materials and forms are available at the grants.gov website (<http://www.Grants.gov>). Additional competition materials can be found on the MBDA Internet Portal (www.mbda.gov). Applicants may also obtain a paper copy of the application forms by making a request to the agency contact, Joann Hill or Nakita Chambers (see VII. Agency Contacts, for contact information).

Applications must be submitted electronically via www.grants.gov and **received by MBDA by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) on December 21, 2015**. The electronic submission will receive a date and time stamp at www.grants.gov and will be processed after it is fully uploaded. The time it takes to completely upload an application will vary depending on a number of factors, including the size of the application, the speed of the applicant's Internet connection, and the time it takes www.grants.gov to process the application. If www.grants.gov rejects the application, the applicant must resubmit the entire application before the deadline date and receive a date and time stamp from www.grants.gov. The www.grants.gov time stamp will be considered the date and time of submission receipt. Before beginning to apply through www.grants.gov, please review the application instructions posted at www.grants.gov and in this FFO Announcement.

C. Grants.gov Registration

To submit an application through www.grants.gov, you must register for a user ID and password. This process can take between three to five business days; and up to four weeks if all steps are not completed correctly. To avoid delays, start early and do not wait until the deadline approaches to register or to review the application instructions. Information about the registration process can be found at <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>.

Before applying, your organization needs to register with Grants.gov, which requires appointment of one or more Authorized Organization Representatives (AOR). Below are instructions for registering as an organization.³

Please make sure to begin registration early, as the process takes between three business days and three weeks. If you do not complete your registration by the submission deadline, then you will not be allowed to submit an application. Applicants should **register as organizations**, not individuals. You must register an (AOR) for your organization. The AORs registered at www.grants.gov are the only officials with the authority to submit applications for your organization. Your organization may authorize multiple AORs for www.grants.gov purposes.

³ An organization is an entity that submits grant applications on behalf of the group, such as a state government, nonprofit organization, or a private business.

D. Electronic Submission

The electronic submission date is the date that applications will be deemed to have been submitted electronically and shall be the date and time received by www.Grants.gov.

You must save and print the proof of submission www.Grants.gov. *Applicants should plan to submit the application electronically several (3-5) days before the deadline to ensure that the application is complete and accepted by grants.gov before the submission deadline.* 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.

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 before an applicable funding cycle deadline, please (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 a case number regarding your communications with Grants.gov. **Please 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) receipt of 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 service by Grants.gov due to unexpected volume of traffic or failure of information technology systems, both of which are highly unlikely. In the event of a confirmed “systems issue,” MBDA may allow more time for applicant submission due to system problems at Grants.gov at the time of application submission that are beyond the control of the applicant. Problems with your application or computer systems are not considered systems issues. Failure to complete the required registration, ensure that the AOR submits the application, and obtains a notice receipt in the form of an email message from www.grants.gov or any other government site (e.g., www.sam.gov), and failure to comply with the requirements of www.grants.gov are not systems issues.

The preferred format for electronic attachments is .pdf. This is the most prevalent format for documents that are scanned from hard-copy. However, the Department will accept electronic files in Word or Excel formats.

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

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency which has an exception from the requirements of 2 CFR § 25.110(b) or (c), or an exception approved by the MBDA under 2 CFR § 25.110(d)) is required to:

- (i) register in SAM before submitting an application;
- (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in the application; and
- (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan 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 a Federal award, MBDA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

F. Returning Grants.Gov Users

Organizations already registered with Grants.gov do not need to re-register, but the organization must maintain its System for Award Management (SAM) registration (formerly Central Contractor Registration (CCR)). If the applicant's SAM registration is not up-to-date the application will not be accepted by Grants.gov. An applicant's CCR username will not work in SAM. Applicants must create a new SAM user account to renew or update your registration. To obtain additional information and to verify that all required registrations are current, please visit www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM. SAM is the Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of CCR Federal Agency Registration (FedReg), Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA), and Excluded Parties List System (EPLS).

G. Content and Form of Application

In general, the applicant's proposal must define how it will implement the Center work requirements (see Appendix K: Work Requirements) and achieve the performance goals set forth in this FFO. A complete application includes the following:

- ✓ Detailed applicant narrative with defined sections;
- ✓ Detailed budget with narratives for each performance year;
- ✓ Required attachments and certain Standard Forms (SF); and,
- ✓ Department of Commerce (CD) forms.

An applicant must submit a separate proposal for each MBDA Business Center for which it is applying. Applications should include the elements for each section as described below in order to be eligible for the maximum number of points. (Refer to Section V.C.—Evaluation Criteria for discussion of points associated with each element discussed in this section.) Applications that fail to include all of the necessary elements (in the order outlined below) will not be reviewed or considered and will be disqualified. The Applicant Narrative should not exceed 50 pages (this does not include budget and budget narrative). A complete application should contain the following:

- 1) Cover Page and Table of Contents. At a minimum, the application cover page must provide the applicant's name, address, telephone number, email address, date of submission, and the Competition ID listed for the Center for which the applicant is applying. Under the table of contents applicants should outline the full contents of the application and provide corresponding page numbers. All pages of the application must be consecutively numbered.
- 2) Applicant Narrative. The applicant narrative must contain the following:

a) Capability.

- i) **Organizational Background and Knowledge of Community:** This section should discuss the Applicant's organizational background, emphasizing knowledge of the minority business sector and strategies for enhancing its growth and expansion. Consideration will be given to whether the applicant has a physical presence in the applicable location and past experience providing related services.

b) Mission Alignment. The extent to which the mission of the applicant organization aligns with the mission of MBDA and the objectives of the MBDA Business Center program.

- i) **Access to Contracts and Markets:** Applicant's knowledge of and experience in public and private sector contracting opportunities for MBEs, as well as demonstrated experience in assisting clients into supply chains, and demonstrated experience working with high growth industries. The applicant's professional working relationships and networks with potential sources of contracts for MBEs will also be considered. Additionally, the applicant's experience with facilitating large contract/procurement deals on behalf of minority firms, conducting business matchmaking forums, and assisting MBEs with the establishment of joint ventures and teaming arrangements will be considered.
- ii) **Access to Capital:** Applicant experience in successfully preparing and matching MBEs with traditional sources of capital, alternative sources of financing (e.g., equity and venture capital), loan and bonding packages, and mergers and acquisitions. Applicant's professional working relationships and networks with financial institutions (e.g., corporate, banking and investment communities) that can be used for immediate implementation.
- iii) **Business Consulting:** The applicant's experience with and strategies for enhancing minority business growth and delivery of business consulting services and related successful client outcomes. Give three examples through client success stories (include description of challenge, action taken and results) and three related customer satisfaction results/ reports.
- iv) **MBE Advocacy:** Demonstrated knowledge and action pertaining to the challenges faced by minority business owners and willingness to provide information and dialogue with MBDA leadership and strategic partners.

c) Resources.

- i) **Key Staff:** Qualifications and experience required of proposed staff, including but not limited to, the Center director and Center business consultants. The applicant is encouraged to identify a proposed Center director with its application or after an award is issued. All Center staff shall possess the ability to deliver and/or support the program services and fulfill the work requirements of this FFO, and must be experienced in using information systems. Position descriptions, qualification requirements, education requirements, and salary ranges must be provided for each proposed Center staff position (include under Program Narrative attachments). If a specific individual is identified for a position, a copy of the individual's resume must be submitted.

Applicant's plan for recruiting staff should be addressed.

- ii) Partners: The applicant's plans for establishing and maintaining a network of strategic partners and the extent to which each partner will support the Center in implementing program services and meeting program performance goals. Whether the partnerships will be used to assist clients with securing contracts, securing financing, job creation, penetrating global markets, achieving size and scale, advocating for minority businesses, or providing referrals for services will also be considered. A description of how the applicant will interact and coordinate with its strategic partners for successful client outcomes will also be considered.
 - iii) Other Resources: Resources that will be used to implement the program in each of the five program years will be considered. Resources include, but are not limited to, existing prior and/or current data lists that will serve in fostering immediate success for the Center.
 - iv) Location/Equipment: The applicant's strategic rationale for the proposed Center office (see Appendix J: Office and Space Requirements). The applicants plan to satisfy Center information technology requirements, including computer hardware, software, creation and support of the Center website, and network map will also be considered (see Appendix E: Information Technology and Computer Requirements).
- d) Techniques and Methodologies.
- i) Performance Measures: For each of the five (5) funding periods, the applicant's techniques and methodology to be used in implementing the program will be considered, including the quarterly breakdown of the performance goals. In addition, the applicant's recognition of and strategy for addressing existing market conditions in achieving performance goals will be considered. Additionally, how the applicant proposes to establish a system that corresponds to, or may complement, MBDA's tracking and validation of contracts and financings will be considered (see Appendix B: Performance Goals by Center). Please note that deviations, either above or below, from the Performance Goals by Center require justification.
 - ii) Start-up Phase: The applicant's project work plan for commencement of Center operations within the initial 60-day period will be considered. The Center shall have sixty (60) days to become fully operational after an award is made (see Appendix K: Work Requirements). The work plan must include significant implementation milestones, such as the hiring of key staff and the opening of the Center facility.
 - iii) Work Requirements Execution Plan: The applicant's description of how Center staff time will be used effectively and efficiently to achieve the work requirements of the overall program (including the start-up phase) will be considered. Please note that the applicant must include a specific five-year plan-of-action detailing how the Center work requirements will be met for each of the five (5) funding periods (see Appendix K: Work Requirements). **A staff allocation chart for each of the five (5) years must also be included as part of the work requirements execution plan (example provided below).** The Center staff allocation summary must include a Center director, and all other Center staff, volunteers, and interns. Each staff role must be identified as

full or part- time, with the estimated hours to be worked on a yearly basis.

- iv) **Center Operating Hours:** A description of the Center operating hours and all scheduled holiday closures for each year of the anticipated five-year award period. Please note: MBDA expects that the operating hours will follow the traditional business hours of opening on or before 9:00 a.m. and remaining open until or after 5:00 p.m. each business day. In addition, the Center hours should follow the federal work schedule regarding the dates that it will be open for business. The federal holiday schedule (*i.e.*, those dates that the federal government is not opened) is available at: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/snow-dismissal-procedures/federal-holidays/#url=2015> for each year of the anticipated five-year award period.

Deviations from the operating hours and business working days expected by MBDA (e.g., religious holidays) must be identified, with justification, in the application.

EXAMPLE ONLY: Staff Allocation Chart Summary – Funding Period 1

Role	Status	Allocation	Available Hours
Director	Full Time	100%	2,040
Business Consultant	Full Time	100%	2,040
Business Consultant	Full Time	100%	2,040
Admin. Asst.	Part Time	25%	510
On Call Contractor	Part Time	25%	510
Total			7,140

H. Required Applicant Narrative Attachments

- 1) Applicant organization chart;
- 2) Proposed Center organization chart (include lines of reporting for the Center director to the head of the applicant organization);
- 3) Scanned Letter of Commitment from the proposed Center director (if applicable);
- 4) Center director resume and three (minimum) professional references must be provided (if proposed);
- 5) Resumes of other key Center staff (if applicable);
- 6) Position descriptions, qualification requirements, and salary ranges for all Center staff;
- 7) Proof of legal entity, for example, State-issued Certificate of Good Standing, copy of registered Articles of Incorporation, by-laws, IRS 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt letter, authorizing legislation, or other evidence of applicant entity legal status;
- 8) Scanned Letter(s) of Commitment from strategic partners and other resources listed, indicating their willingness to work with the applicant (ten maximum); and
- 9) Quarterly breakdown of performance goals, one chart for each year (see Appendix B:

Performance Goals by Center Location).

I. Proposed Budget and Budget Narrative

All Center cost expenditures should be broken down into their individual units and discussed. The budget narrative must match the proposed line item budget, time phased plan, and staff allocation table. Fringe benefits and other percentage item calculations should match the proposed budget line-item and narrative. Line item amounts in the detailed budget and budget narrative must match the budget numbers reflected in Standard Form (SF) 424 (one for all five years) and 424A (one for each of the five years).

All costs included in the proposed budget must be allowable, allocable, and reasonable. Each item of cost must be accompanied by a sufficiently detailed description and cost breakdown to enable reviewers to determine if the cost is allowable, allocable, and reasonable. One word descriptions and lump sum amounts are not adequate for justifying costs. Each budget item should be broken out and described fully so that there is no ambiguity or question regarding its relevance or reasonableness to the program objectives and reasonable. The following Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Guidance will be used to determine allowable costs, and will apply to the entire amount of the Center award, including both the federal and non-federal costs. See, [Uniform Guidance: Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards \(Uniform Guidance\)](#), 2 CFR Pt. 200 (2015); *adopted by U.S. Department of Commerce, 80 Fed. Reg. 44829 (August 27, 2015).*

J. Performance-Based Budgeting

MBDA will consider the extent to which the line-item budget and budget narrative relates to the work requirements and performance measures (*i.e.*, performance-based budgeting). The budget will be compared to the Applicant Narrative to determine if the budget is realistic from a programmatic perspective and whether the proposed costs are necessary to complete the work requirements. Costs included in the budget that are determined to be unrealistic may be considered as an indication of an applicant's lack of understanding of the requirements of the Center program and/or the methods that must be utilized to deliver services.

K. Program Income Budgeting

Applicants must submit a line item budget (SF-424A) and corresponding budget narrative for each of the five (5) funding periods under the award.

The **federal contribution to the budget is non-negotiable**. The amount of federal funds designated for the award in the FFO (*see* Appendix A: Funding Availability by Center Location) must not be exceeded in the proposed budget. Costs must be proposed, on a per-event, per-person, per-item basis for all travel (*e.g.*, airfare, per diem, ground transportation). Each of the training events are set forth in this announcement (*see* Appendix F: Training Requirements and Definitions). The applicant must budget accordingly for this requirement. If a venue for an event is not stated, applicants are to assume that the event will be held in Washington, D.C. Applicants may include training costs under federal and/or non-federal cost share.

Non-federal cost share must be itemized on the SF-424A, the program line-item budget and in

the budget narrative. All third-party, in-kind contributions must be supported by a scanned original and signed commitment letter from those resources. It is recommended that letters of commitment for years 1-3 be provided in the application and optional for years 4-5. Failure to provide this documentation may result in the disallowance of the amount proposed, reduction of available points or possible rejection of the application for an award.

Special Mention: The applicant must also describe how the Center director will have access to necessary funds and/or decision making for the use of funds to ensure optimization of the Business Center service delivery. Failure to address this in Budget Narrative section of the proposal will result in the applicant losing 2 points.

Program Income: As discussed in the FFO (*see* Section II. D- Non-Federal Cost Share Requirement), the generation of program income is mandatory for the Center program and the Center operator is required to account for all program income generated in whole or in part under the financial assistance awards. Program income is defined as gross income earned by a non-Federal entity that is directly generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the Federal award during the period of performance. For purposes of the MBDA Business Center program, program income specifically includes client fees, membership fees, success fees and other income generated by the center. *See*, 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.80 and 200.307.

For each of the five anticipated funding periods under the Center award, applicants must identify:

- 1) How program income will be generated by the Center;
- 2) The anticipated amount of program income (which must be identified as non-federal cost share in the project's proposed budget);
- 3) How the program income will be used to further the Center objectives; and
- 4) Mandatory 33% non-federal cost share. Proposed fee structures and other methods for the Center's generation of program income must be acceptable to MBDA and approved by the Grants Officer.

The applicant should take care in projecting the total dollar amount in fees and other program income that will be generated each performance year. The applicant must state clearly the methodology for estimating the amount of fees to be billed and to be collected.

It is also important to note that in some cases the Center operator may apply a policy for fee waivers and/or accounts not collectable. The applicant must indicate, for each of the funding periods, at what point fees are charged to its clients (*e.g.*, upon completion of work assignment and/or successful completion of awarded transaction) and how it intends to collect and manage fees. These items should be taken into consideration and discussed in the budget narrative.

L. Funding Restrictions

- 1) Profits or Fees: Profits, fees or other increments above cost may not be paid on MBDA financial assistance awards and must not be included as part of the proposal.
- 2) Indirect Costs: Indirect cost rates will generally be set in accordance with negotiated indirect cost rate agreements which are established for all Federal assistance awards by the cognizant federal agency. The Program Officer must consult with the Grants Officer and FALD before limiting indirect costs.

Indirect costs are those costs proposed for common or joint objectives and which cannot be readily identified with a particular cost objective. Therefore, if the MBDA award is to be the sole source of support for the applicant organization, all costs are direct costs and indirect costs should not be proposed. (The term “indirect costs” has been replaced with the term “facilities and administrative costs” for educational institutions and non-profit organizations). See, 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(a).

Under the Center program, indirect costs charged to an award shall not exceed the indirect cost rate negotiated and approved by the applicant’s cognizant federal agency. In addition, in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f), any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, except for those non-Federal entities described in Paragraph D.1.b of Appendix VII to 2 C.F.R. Part 200 (specifically, a governmental department or agency that receives more than \$35 million in direct Federal funding), may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs.

This limitation applies separately and collectively to each of the three anticipated funding periods under the award. Indirect costs in excess of the above limitations must not be included as part of the proposal. Indirect costs proposed under the award must be clearly identified as a separate budget line-item.

If indirect costs are included in the budget, the applicant must include a copy of its current Facilities and Administrative Cost Rate Agreement or documentation establishing that it has a pending application. If an applicant that does not have a current Facilities and Administrative Cost Rate Agreement negotiated and approved by the Department of Commerce (or by the applicable cognizant Federal agency) may propose facilities and administrative costs in its budget. However, the applicant must prepare and submit a facilities and administrative cost allocation plan and rate proposal or a negotiated indirect cost rate as required by 2 C.F.R. part 200 “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.” See, 2 C.F.R. § 200.414. The allocation plan and the rate proposal must be submitted to MBDA (or applicable cognizant Federal agency) within ninety days from the award start date. The applicant shall provide the Grants Officer with a copy of the transmittal letter.

The maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which MBDA will reimburse a recipient shall be the lesser of the: (i) line-item amount for the Federal share of facilities and administrative costs contained in the MBDA approved budget for the award, or (ii) Federal share of the total allocable facilities and administrative costs of the award based on the cost rate approved by the Department of Commerce (or applicable cognizant Federal agency), provided that the cost rate is current at the time the costs were incurred and

provided that the rate is approved on or before the award end date. The applicant should include a statement in its budget narrative if the applicant does not have, or has not applied for, a Facilities and Administrative Cost Rate Agreement.

The indirect cost policies contained in 2 C.F.R. part 200 (Appendix III, “Indirect (F&A) Costs Identification and Assignment, and Rate Determination for Educational Organizations”; Appendix IV, “Indirect (F&A) Costs Identification and Assignment, and Rate Determination for Nonprofit Organizations”; and Appendix VII, “States and Local Government and Indian Tribe Indirect Cost Proposals”) will apply to MBDA awards for its business development programs. *See generally*, 2 C.F.R. § 200.414 (e).

Center operators are expected to understand and adhere to regulations pertaining to use of Federal funds.

M. Bonus Points Available

1. Youth Entrepreneurship — The Agency has determined that it is important to assist in the development of the next generation of minority entrepreneurs. Applicants may receive bonus points for proposals that include concepts to support youth entrepreneurship in addition to program priorities, that:

- 1) Meet the need for awareness and exploration activities in entrepreneurship for minority youth;
- 2) Instruct minority students in entrepreneurship skills that will give them a head start in the business world and an incentive to continue their education;
- 3) Provide knowledge and education on the fundamentals of entrepreneurship;
- 4) Teach the importance of creating capital ownership and wealth within a community and help bring economic empowerment to the members of the community;
- 5) Begin preparing a class of future minority entrepreneurs, especially in urban and rural areas marked by underserved populations;
- 6) Enhance business growth, create jobs, develop community resources and stimulate national economy;
- 7) Show minority youth the real possibility of business ownership as a career; and
- 8) Provide early introduction to economics, entrepreneurship skills, and venture initiation.

This component is optional and any service(s) proposed for youth entrepreneurship are in addition to the core MBDA Business Center program. Proposed concepts cannot be used as a substitute for the defined MBDA Business Center program and service requirements.

An applicant proposing Youth Entrepreneurship development must fully describe the aspects of any concept in addition to the work requirements that the applicant will implement. Some examples have been provided (*see* Appendix G: Youth Entrepreneurship Concepts). Applicants are not required to utilize these examples. MBDA encourages any innovative concepts.

Proposed ideas must be fully developed and articulated along with processes and anticipated results.

2. Non-Federal Cost Share in Excess of Minimum - The Agency has determined that additional resources allocated to the Center can improve the services provided to MBEs. Applicants may propose non-federal cost sharing in excess of the minimum amounts indicated in this FFO. An applicant will be issued additional “bonus” points to the final scoring (see Section V- D. Evaluation Criteria).

N. Standard Forms

Applications must contain the following Standard Forms (SF):

- 1) SF-424 — Application for Federal Assistance (one form to cover all funding periods);
- 2) SF-424A — Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs;
- 3) SF-424B — Assurances-Non-Construction Programs
- 4) SF-LLL — Disclosure of Lobbying Activities; and
- 5) CD-511 — Certification Regarding Lobbying.

O. Application Submission Checklist

A submission checklist has been developed as a guide for applicants. Do not submit newspaper clippings, brochures, letters of recommendation or other superfluous documents, as they will not be considered in the evaluation process (see Appendix H: Application Checklist).

SECTION V: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. Initial Screening

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

- 1) The application is received after the closing date;
- 2) The applicant's authorized organizational representative (AOR) fails to submit Standard Form 424 by the closing date; or
- 3) The application does not provide for the operation of a Center.

B. MBDA Merit Review Panel

Each responsive application will receive an independent, merit review by a panel qualified to evaluate the applications submitted based on the published criterion. The review panel will consist of at least three (3) individuals, all of whom could be a combination of full-time federal employees and/or non-federal civilians at least one of whom will be an MBDA employee. Each reviewer shall evaluate and provide a score for each proposal. Each merit review panel (through the panel Chairperson) shall provide the MBDA Selecting Official with a ranking of the applications based on the average of the reviewers' scores.

A rank order of all applications will be established by averaging the individual review ratings for each application. The review panel may discuss the applications but are not required to reach a consensus on scores for each applicant. The reviewers will neither vote nor score applications as part of the review process. The reviewers will make their recommendations for funding based on rank order and the selection factors listed in the next section to the Selecting Official, the MBDA National Director, who is responsible for making final recommendations to the NOAA Grants Officer.

Each application will be evaluated based on the criteria set out in the FFO (*see* Section V—Application Review Information) for a maximum of 110 points (including 10 bonus points). The Applicant Narrative section of the application will be eligible for a total of 75 points, the Proposed Budget and Budget Narrative section will be eligible for 25 points. A complete application will contain information outlined in the remainder of this Section (C through F).

C. Evaluation Criteria

Successful applicants may possess experience in assisting minority firms in obtaining large scale contracts/procurements and financing awards; accessing established supply chains; advocating for minority businesses; educating and assisting minority firms in joint ventures, teaming arrangements, mergers and acquisitions; and facilitating entry and large scale transactions in global markets. It is also anticipated that the mission of successful applicant organizations will align with both the mission of MBDA and the MBDA Business Center program objectives.

Application evaluations will be based the following criteria:

- 1) **Applicant Narrative:** The Applicant Narrative section of the proposal will be evaluated, and applicants will be selected, based on the level at which the proposal addresses the below listed evaluation criteria. Note, detailed narrative requirements for each listed criterion are in the FFO (*see above*, Section IV.G—Content and Form of Application).

Applicant Narrative Evaluation Criteria	Points
Capability - Organizational Background and Knowledge of Community (5 points) - Mission Alignment (5 points) - Access to Markets (5 points) - Access to Capital (5 points) - Business Consulting to Clients (5 points) - Key Staff (5 points) - MBE Advocacy (5 Points)	35
Resources - Key Staff and Partners (5 points) - Resources (5 points) - Location/Equipment (5 points)	15
Techniques and Methodologies - Performance Measures (10 points) - Start-up Phase (10 points) - Work Requirements Execution Plan (5 points)	25
Applicant Narrative Total	75

- 2) **Proposed Budget and Budget Narrative:** The Proposed Budget and Budget Narrative sections will be evaluated on the criteria identified below. Note: detailed cost proposal requirements are in the FFO (*see* Section IV. F—Content and Form of Application).

Budget Detail and Narrative Evaluation Criteria	Points
Reasonableness, Allowability, and Allocability of Proposed Program Costs	10
Performance-Based Budgeting	5
Program Income Budgeting	10
Budget Detail and Narrative Total	25

- 3) **Bonus Points (optional):**

a) **Youth Entrepreneurship:** Youth Entrepreneurship is optional and may not be considered for points if required criteria are not included in an application. Proposals may include service concepts that are above and beyond the required services (*see* Appendix G: Youth Entrepreneurship Concepts).

A maximum of five (5) bonus points are available under this criterion.

b) Non-Federal Cost Share in Excess of Minimum: Proposals may include proposed non-federal cost sharing that is above the Project minimum as listed in *Section II.A – Funding Availability*. A maximum of five (5) bonus points are available under this criterion as follows:

Value Exceeding Minimum Cost Share	Bonus Points	Value Exceeding Minimum Cost Share	Bonus Points
\$10,000-\$29,999	1 bonus points	\$70,000-\$89,999	4 bonus points
\$30,000-\$49,999	2 bonus points	\$90,000 & more	5 bonus points
\$50,000-\$69,999	3 bonus points		

C. Final Selection and Recommendation for Funding

The MBDA National Director is the MBDA Selecting Official and makes the final recommendation to the Grants Officer regarding the funding of applications under this competitive solicitation. MBDA expects to recommend funding for the highest ranking applicants, as evaluated and recommended by the review panel and taking into account results of the respective merit panel review. However, the MBDA National Director may decide not to select any of the recommended applicants, or may select an applicant out of rank order, for the following reasons:

1) Program Priorities – one or more of the following:

- a. proposals aligned with or related to Secretarial priorities or initiatives;
- b. geographic or ethnic diversity;
- c. funding priorities; and
- d. program balance.

2) Lack of Availability of MBDA Funds

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

3) Federal Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants

After applications are proposed for funding by the selecting official, the Grants Management Division performs administrative reviews. These may include reviews of the financial stability of an applicant, 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. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk may be applied to an award.

For any Federal award under this notice where Federal share will be greater than the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$150,000; *see* 2 CFR § 200.88) over the period of performance, recipients must note that: (1) MBDA, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently FAPIIS) (*see* 41 U.S.C. § 2313); (2) an applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM; (3) MBDA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR §200.205.

D. Intergovernmental Review

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

E. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Anticipated time for processing awards is two hundred (200) days from the closing date for receipt of applications. MBDA anticipates that the MBDA Business Center awards will be made with a start date of September 1, 2016.

G. Application Submission Checklist can be found in the FFO (*see* Appendix H: Application Checklist).

SECTION VI: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Federal Award Notices

The notice of award (CD-450) is executed by the Department of Commerce Grants Officer and is the authorizing award document. It is generally provided electronically via the Grants Online system to the Authorized Representative of the recipient organization. The Authorized Representative for a successful applicant will receive instructions from MBDA on how to access the Grants Online system to accept the award.

MBDA will notify unsuccessful applicants, in writing, after a final selection has been made and after an offer has been accepted. Those applications that are selected for funding will be retained by MBDA for a period of three (3) years from the date of the awardee's final expenditure after which they will be destroyed.

On occasion, competitive solicitations or competitive panels may produce less than optimum results, such as a competition resulting in the receipt of no applications or a competition resulting in all unresponsive applications received. If the competition results in only one application, it may or may not require additional action from MBDA depending upon the competitive history of the area, the quality of application received, and the time and cost limits involved. In the event that any or all of these conditions arise, MBDA shall take the most time and cost-effective approach available that is in the best interest of the Government. This includes but is not limited to: (1) a new competition; (2) re-paneling; or (3) negotiation.

B. Post Award Conference

MBDA shall conduct mandatory post-award conferences to ensure that Center operators have a clear understanding of the program and its components. During the post-award conference, MBDA will: (1) orient Center operator and Center staff; (2) explain program reporting requirements and procedures; (3) identify available resources that can enhance the capabilities of the Center; and (4) provide detailed information about MBDA's Business Internet Portal and other online systems.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in 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 Fed. Reg. 78390) are applicable to this solicitation. You may obtain a copy of this notice by contacting the MBDA contact under *Section VI—Agency Contacts*, or by entering the *Federal Register* volume and page numbers provided in the previous sentence at the following Internet website: <https://federalregister.gov/a/2014-30297>. Awards made under this announcement are subject to the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Please note that on December 26, 2013, OMB published final guidance titled *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (OMB Uniform Guidance)* (<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/12/26/2013-30465/uniform-administrative-requirements-cost-principles-and-audit-requirements-for-federal-awards>), which streamlines

the language from eight existing OMB circulars, including *Cost Principles (OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A-122)* and administrative requirements (*OMB Circulars A-102 and A-110*), into one consolidated set of guidance applicable to federal assistance awards. The *OMB Uniform Guidance* supersedes the Department's uniform administrative requirements set out at 15 C.F.R. parts 14 and 24. See, [Uniform Guidance: Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards \(Uniform Guidance\)](#), 2 CFR Pt. 200 (2015); adopted by U.S. Department of Commerce, 80 Fed. Reg. 44829 (August 27, 2015). In addition, the audit requirements of the *OMB Uniform Guidance* (reforming current *OMB Circulars A-133 and A-50*) will apply to audits of non-Federal entities beginning on or after December 26, 2014. Therefore, notwithstanding the above paragraph, applicants need to familiarize themselves with the *OMB Uniform Guidance*. Additional information on the substance of and transition to the *OMB Uniform Guidance* may be found at <https://cfo.gov/cofar/>.

D. Program Award Requirements

- 1) Establishment of Office: The physical location of the Center office must be within an applicable city or metropolitan area as specified in this FFO. The Center operator must open a physical office and be fully operational within sixty (60) days of receipt of the award. "Fully operational" means that all staff is hired, all required signs are up, all items of furniture and equipment (*e.g.*, computer hardware, software, Internet services, phones, faxes) are in place, and the Center's doors have been fully opened to the public for service. Within sixty (60) days of receipt of the award, the Center operator shall report to the Federal Program Officer (via Grants Online) that it has complied with this requirement. Failure to be fully operational within sixty (60) days may result in appropriate enforcement action under the award, up to and including termination. If the Center is co-located with the operator, it must have a "separate identity" that must include, but is not limited to, appropriate signage and working offices for Center staff that are visually independent (or are perceived as standing apart) from the operator's non-Center operations and personnel.

The Center must be accessible to persons with disabilities and strategically situated in the applicable region to ensure that it is: (1) close to available business resources; (2) within a reasonable commuting distance to the minority business community; and (3) professional in appearance and conducive to supporting the Center brand.

The Center must provide services to eligible clients. Services can be delivered in person or virtually. MBDA calls and emails to the Center operator and/or the Center director must be returned by the next business day. In addition, the Center operator and director shall provide MBDA and other authorized federal government officials with access to the center upon request. Within sixty (60) days after receipt of the award, the Center operator shall report via Grants Online to the Federal Program Officer that it has complied with all information technology requirements in this FFO (*see* Appendix E: Information Technology and Computer Requirements). Within sixty (60) days after receipt of the award, the Center operator shall also report the name, contact telephone number, and email address of the Center director, Center staff member(s), and the network or system administrator. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in enforcement actions, including termination of the award.

- 2) Personnel: Each Center operator is required to have a Center director employed and dedicated on a full-time basis to MBDA Programs no less than the equivalence of a 40 hour work week. The Center director must be removed from any competing interests.

The Center director is vital to the Center program and is viewed as the key representative to ensure the Center achieves its performance goals. The Center director must possess suitable management and business qualifications, including a minimum of a bachelor's degree or equivalent experience in a business-related field. Failure to hire a Center director within sixty (60) days may result in enforcement action under the award, including the withholding of award payments.

The selection of a Center director requires the MBDA Federal Program Officer (FPO) to conduct a review of candidate qualifications. The Center operator shall submit to the FPO at the onset of competition and/or after an award is issued, the Center director's resume and a minimum of three professional references. The names of the successful candidates will be provided to the Grants officer via the FPO within sixty (60) days of the receipt of the award.

The Center operator shall employ personnel with the knowledge and skills to develop and manage strategic relationships that enhance the Center's ability to source contracts, counsel minority firms on securing large contract and financial transactions, assist clients in negotiations with purchasing organizations and financing institutions, coordinate and collaborate on client service efforts, actively promote the brand of the center and advise MBEs on accessing global markets as outlined in the FFO (see Appendix K: Work Requirements). All consulting personnel should have a minimum of a bachelor's degree or equivalent experience.

The Center personnel working with clients must possess the ability to: (1) promote and demonstrate the value of services offered to the client; (2) generate program income for the Center; (3) track service delivery on a consistent and regular basis; (4) collect quantitative and qualitative performance data; and (5) ensure optimal service delivery, client satisfaction, and operational quality standards are met, and ensure service optimization.

The Center operator shall, to the best of its ability and available resources, provide competitive financial incentives and/or salaries to the Center staff. The Center operator shall adhere to commonly accepted/best practices in human capital management. The Center may not engage in employee nepotism.

All personnel charged to the Center must directly contribute to the operation of the Center. There should be no "co-mingling" of staff time and resources being charged to the MBDA grant. Co-mingling is prohibited and is subject to enforcement action under the award, including the withholding of award payments and possible termination of the Center award (see Appendix D: Definition of Key Terms). Staff vacancies shall be filled promptly. Vacancies beyond forty-five (45) days may result in appropriate enforcement action under the award, up to and including termination.

If a Center operator elects to apply and is issued an additional award from MBDA for special project(s), the Center operator may elect to allocate a maximum of 25% of the Center director's time to the special project award. The election may not result in an

allocation of the director's time to exceed 100%. In addition, all payments for the salary of a director must be in proportion to the amount of time allocated between the MBDA Center award and the special project, and must be made from separate funds held in separate accounts for each project. If a Center operator elects to allocate time to a special project, the allocation in the original award may require amendment to ensure that the total allocation does not exceed the 100% cap.

- 3) Training: MBDA will conduct training sessions for Center staff (subject to the availability of funds and training resources). The training sessions are mandatory (except where otherwise indicated) and were designed to improve communication, client service delivery, performance, and reporting. The Center training requirements are set forth in the FFO (see Appendix F: Training Requirements and Definitions.) Successful applicants are required to allocate appropriate personnel and funds to support all trainings.
- 4) Network, Tools and Information Exchange: MBDA will provide access to business development tools to help streamline and enhance client service delivery throughout the Center network and related MBDA projects. MBDA requires regular and ongoing use of these tools. MBDA will provide an orientation to successful applicants on how this technology can be leveraged by the Center to augment service delivery.
- 5) Project Monitoring and Advisement: Each Center is funded at consecutive one-year performance periods. Continued funding of the awards is subject to the terms and conditions as outlined in this FFO. As such, MBDA will systematically monitor the performance of the Center, as provided under the management assessment performance measure (see Appendix C: Performance Measures and Points). This monitoring includes regular review of the Center's data input to the MBDA CRM Performance system.

MBDA will conduct the following performance assessments for each program year:

Performance Assessment	Operating Period
Semi-annual	April 1 – September 30
Cumulative year-end	April 1 – March 31

These assessments are based on the Center's timely submission of its required performance narrative reports (see Appendix C: Performance Measures and Points).

MBDA will conduct an initial and periodic on-site assessment of the Center to verify the Center's performance/claims, including but not limited to a review of client files, program income, and overall operations. MBDA may also conduct a review of reported assistance by surveying and/or interviewing the clients assisted by the center.

MBDA will assess the Center's effectiveness in providing business development services to their respective minority business communities, and will provide a report of findings and recommendations for improvement as a result of evaluations and monitoring visits. MBDA will approve qualifications of key Center staff and respond to Center requests for MBDA action.

MBDA may conduct a consultation with a Center that is operating at an unsatisfactory

performance level. This consultation is designed to assist the Center through collaborative support. The Center may be required to develop a performance improvement plan based on MBDA's findings, suggestions and recommendations. In addition, a Center performing at an unsatisfactory level is subject to enforcement actions under the award, up to and including termination.

- 6) Reporting: (i) Financial reports are to be submitted to the Department of Commerce Grants Office on a quarterly basis. A final financial report is due within ninety (90) days after expiration of the award. (ii) Performance narrative reports are to be submitted to the Federal Program Officer within forty-five (45) days after the end of the second program quarter of each funding period. (iii) An annual or final performance report is due forty-five (45) days after the end of each funding period. (iv) Expense summary reports are to be submitted to Federal Program Officer within forty-five (45) days after the end of each quarter of each funding period. (v) Additional reporting requirements are set forth in the FFO (see Appendix C: Performance Measures and Related Definitions). Failure to submit reports on time may result in MBDA award enforcement action or delay in access to federal funds.
- 7) Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 Reporting: The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 include a requirement for awardees of applicable federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. 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 on all sub-awards over \$25,000. Please see the OMB guidance published at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which can be accessed at: http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200_main_02.tpl
- 8) Restrictions Governing Making Grants to Corporations Convicted of Felony Criminal Violations and/or Unpaid Federal Tax Liabilities: In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, execution by an applicant of the Representation by Corporations Regarding an Unpaid Delinquent Tax Liability or a Felony Conviction Under Any Federal Law (see Appendix A) will be required in a format requested by NOAA before any award will be made under this FFO.
- 9) General Program Requirements: Each Center is part of a broader MBDA network and must be able to collaborate with both Agency staff, other funded Centers and the MBDA network. As a part of business center operations, the Business Center accepts client referrals from MBDA Headquarters and the MBDA nationwide network of funded programs and projects. MBDA anticipates the Center would, to the best of its abilities, provide services to those firms beyond a reasonable distance through virtual communications. The following graphic outlines the overall service model for the Center program. Detailed program requirements are described in the FFO (see Appendix K: Work Requirements).

SECTION VII: AGENCY CONTACT

Prospective applicants may contact:

Ms. Joann J. Hill, Chief
MBDA Office of Business Development
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W., Room 5079
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 202-482-1940

Nakita Chambers
MBDA Program Manager
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W., Room 5079
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 202-482-0065

SECTION VIII: OTHER INFORMATION

A. Past Performance and Non-Compliance with Award Provisions

A consistent pattern of unsatisfactory performance under prior federal awards may result in an application not being considered for funding. Failure to comply with any or all of the provisions of an award 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 actions: establishment of an account receivable, withholding payments under any Department of Commerce awards to the recipient, changing the method of payment from advance to reimbursement only, imposition of other special award conditions, suspension of any active Department of Commerce awards, and termination of any active Department of Commerce awards.

B. Limitation of Liability

In no event will MBDA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if the MBDA Business Center program fails to receive funding or if the program opportunity is cancelled because of Department of Commerce or MBDA priorities. All funding periods under the award are subject to the availability of funds to support the continuation of the Center. Publication of this FFO does not obligate MBDA or the Department of Commerce to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

C. 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, Subsection F. Recipients expending \$750,000 or more in federal funds during the recipient's fiscal year 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 \$750,000 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.

D. Freedom of Information Act Disclosure

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. § 552) and the Department of Commerce's implementing regulations at 15 C.F.R. part 4 set forth the rules and procedures to make requested material, information and records publicly available. Information submitted in response to this announcement is subject to the FOIA.

E. Appendices to the FFO and Program Requirements Documents

The appendices and MBDA Business Center program documents listed below are incorporated by reference into this announcement. It is incumbent on all applicants to access and familiarize themselves with the information contained therein.