

## Virtual Business Center

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## ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Virtual Business Center

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: MBDA-OBID-2019-2006126

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.802, Minority Business Resource Development

Dates: A completed application must be transmitted and time-stamped at [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) no later than 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Savings Time (EDT) on July 26, 2019. Applications received after this time will not be reviewed or considered for funding under this Announcement.

MBDA will conduct a pre-application teleconference on June 20, 2019 from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. EDT. Participants must register at least 24 hours in advance of the teleconference. Please visit the MBDA Internet Portal at [www.mbda.gov](http://www.mbda.gov) for more information.

Funding Opportunity Description: This notice requests applications for the development of a Minority Business Development Agency Virtual Business Center (VBC). The VBC is a new business assistance program designed to maximize the use of technology in serving Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs). The VBC will leverage partner resources to deliver robust tools and services. This program can support the use of a fee for service model.

This notice also provides the public with information and guidelines on how MBDA will select proposals and administer Federal financial assistance under this Announcement. The funding instrument is a Cooperative Agreement and includes substantial Federal government programmatic involvement. Substantial involvement means that, after award, MBDA program staff will assist and guide the provision of VBC activities.

This Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is not to start an individual business. Applications must be submitted for the operation of the VBC 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.

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

## I. Funding Opportunity Description

## A. Program Objective

The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), a bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce, will provide Federal assistance to support the development and implementation of a Virtual Business Center (VBC). In accordance with Executive Order 11625 and 15 U.S.C. § 1512, MBDA is soliciting competitive applications from eligible organizations for the development and operation of a VBC.

MBDA will award one (1) individual cooperative agreement pursuant to this Announcement. The award recipient must be a U.S. entity located in any U.S. State or the District of Columbia. Services and technology provided must be based in the U.S. State or District of Columbia.

Today, it is estimated that Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) number more than 11 million and generate over \$1.4 trillion in gross receipts. Minority-owned firms are consistently cited by economists as an engine of employment, growth, and economic expansion in America. Most MBEs are small and require assistance to grow, scale, and build capacity. The consistent growth rate in the number of MBEs requires MBDA to apply a new approach to service more firms annually and in a cost-efficient manner.

The VBC is part of MBDA's modernization initiative and is a natural evolution of MBDA's mission to provide management and technical assistance to an ever-expanding base of MBEs. As a basic aspect of service, the VBC must provide online management and technical assistance and business development services augmented by VBC technology, staff, strategic partners, and subject matter experts. The VBC's focus is to deliver management and technical assistance through online access (including, online self-help information and resources, tools, search wizards, and referrals), one-on-one human interaction consulting services (personalized management and technical assistance), and high-value technology platforms (through strategic partners).

The VBC will offer a virtual platform for strategic partners to provide services to minority-owned businesses. The VBC must contain (but is not limited to) the following categories of virtual services: MBE registry, opportunity matching, business development services, management and technical assistance, access to resources, directories, and business consulting. The VBC must allow for personalization of services rendered to MBEs.

The VBC will provide services to the following eligible MBEs that are owned or controlled by the following persons or groups of persons: African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Native American (including Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, 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.

#### B. Program Priorities

The primary drivers of the VBC are access to information, resources, and counseling that result in discernable growth of minority businesses. The VBC will provide management and technical assistance to MBEs of different sizes, industries and years in business. The VBC will play a strategic role in growing MBEs to higher annual revenue thresholds. (e.g., start-up to \$100,000, \$100,000 to \$250,000, \$250,000 to \$500,000, \$500,000 to \$750,000, and \$750,000 to \$1,000,000, \$1,000,000 and beyond).

MBDA anticipates the VBC will be able to assist tens of thousands of the estimated 11 million MBEs in the United States and U.S. territories, by using technology to modernize service deliverables. The VBC will leverage technology to communicate and interact with MBE clients. The VBC will aim its services to address the need for a mobile-first approach, specifically meeting MBE business assistance need via mobile devices.

The VBC will be required to work collaboratively with other MBDA sponsored programs/projects (“Network”) and MBDA staff. The VBC will engage the MBDA Network and offer its services to assist MBE clients through Network collaboration. The VBC should anticipate receiving and servicing MBE referrals from the Network, likewise referring VBC clients to the Network for specialized assistance.

#### C. Program Authority

MBDA is authorized pursuant to Executive Order 11625 and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2019, Pub. L. No. 116-6 (2019) to provide financial assistance to public and private organizations so that they may render technical and management assistance to minority business enterprises and defray all or part of the costs of pilot or demonstration projects conducted by public or private agencies or organizations which are designed to overcome the special challenges of minority business enterprises.

## II. Award Information

#### A. Funding Availability

MBDA anticipates making one (1) award, covering a four-year period, under this Announcement in the total amount of \$5,200,000 in federal funding. Federal funding available at this time is limited to \$1,300,000 for Year 1. MBDA anticipates providing \$1,300,000 in Federal funding for each additional year of the award. The minimum non-Federal share is \$325,000 (i.e., 20% of total project costs) for each year of the award.

MBDA funding for FY2019 has been appropriated for Year 1. See Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2019, Pub. L. No. 116-6 (2019). Receipt of any prospective funding is contingent upon the availability of funds from Congress, satisfactory performance, continued relevance to program objectives and will be at the sole discretion of the Department of Commerce. Publication of this NOFO does not obligate the U.S. Department of Commerce or MBDA to award any specific grant/cooperative agreement or to obligate all or any part of the available funds.

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

#### B. Project/Award Period

MBDA will issue one award for a four-year term, to be funded one year at a time: Year 1 – from September 1, 2019 through August 31, 2020; Year 2 – from September 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021; Year 3 – September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2022; and, Year 4 – September 1, 2022 through August 31, 2023. Receipt of any prospective funding is contingent upon the availability of funds, as appropriated from Congress, continued relevance to program objectives, and satisfactory performance. Additional funding for Years 2, 3 and 4 will be provided at the sole discretion of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

MBDA may approve funding to the VBC for Years 2, 3 and 4 if the VBC is operating at a "Satisfactory" performance level at the time during the program year when MBDA makes recommendations to the Grants Officer for continuation funding. 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, and availability of funds. The VBC operator with a performance rating less than "Satisfactory" will not qualify for additional funding. Such an operator, however, may be eligible to receive continuation funding subject to special award conditions; funding for the next funding period would occur only at the discretion of MBDA and subject to the approval of the Grants Officer. MBDA and the Department of Commerce

will consider all the facts and circumstances, such as but not limited to, market conditions, most recent performance of the VBC, and any mitigating circumstances.

### C. Type of Funding Instrument

The VBC financial assistance award is in the form of a cooperative agreement. MBDA shall maintain substantial involvement with the VBC operator and VBC staff throughout the award period. The substantial involvement will include a post-award conference, data sharing, analytics, advisement, strategic planning for online tools and applications, collaboration with MBDA and the MBDA Network, project monitoring, and administrative and reporting requirements.

## III. Eligibility Information

### A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include: for-profit entities (including but not limited to sole-proprietorships, partnerships, limited liability companies, and corporations), non-profit organizations, state and local government entities, quasi-government entities, Tribal entities, and educational institutions.

### B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost sharing or matching is the portion of the VBC costs not paid by Federal funds. These costs are provided by the VBC operator 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. Applicants may contribute non-Federal cost share to the award by one or more of the following methods: (1) program fees; (2) applicant cash contributions; (3) applicant in-kind contributions (i.e., non-cash); (4) third-party cash; and/or (5) third-party in-kind contributions (including a state or local grant or other form of support for the VBC). All cost sharing or matching must be consistent with the requirements of 2 CFR §200.306(b).

The VBC shall have a non-Federal cost share of at least \$325,000 (i.e., 20% of total project costs) for each year of the award. Applicants may propose non-Federal cost share beyond the minimum \$325,000 requirement. Applicants who propose non-Federal cost share in excess of the minimum \$325,000 will receive bonus points under the competitive evaluation process (see Section V.A.3. Bonus Points – Non-Federal Cost Share in Excess of Minimum). Please ensure that the application, budget narrative, and budget (SF-424As) for the four years of the award are consistent.

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 VBC's non-Federal cost share and must be used in furtherance of program objectives. In addition, for each funding period under the award, the VBC operator will be required to contribute an acceptable form of non-Federal cost share to the award to compensate for uncollected program income if it is included in the approved VBC budget.

If the VBC 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 VBC operator in furtherance of eligible VBC objectives. Subject to written approval by the Grants Officer, program income generated by the VBC that cannot be expended during the funding period in which it is earned may be carried forward by the VBC operator for one year and expended only in furtherance of program objectives in the award's next subsequent funding period.

However, the VBC operator may not apply excess program income generated during one funding period to prior program funding periods to fund non-Federal cost share shortfalls, without prior approval. In addition, program income that is not (1) expended in furtherance of VBC 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 VBC's total allowable cost. The VBC operator may be required to reimburse MBDA for some, or all, of the Federal share disbursed to the VBC operator under the award if any of the aforementioned circumstances occur.

#### C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

The successful applicant will possess experience in developing, managing, and maintaining an online service delivery portal and customer response operations. The successful applicant will also possess business development expertise such as, but not limited to: assisting businesses to grow through management and technical consulting; acquiring contracts/procurements; accessing established supply chains; accessing subject matter experts for guidance, advice, and counseling; training and educating firms of different sizes (i.e., start-up, micro, small, growth); assisting and supporting firms to access capital.

### 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>). Additional competition materials can be found on the MBDA Internet Portal ([www.mbda.gov](http://www.mbda.gov)).

## B. Content and Form of Application

**General Requirements.** The application must provide sufficient information for the agency to make a determination on the merits of the proposal. The applicant's proposal must define how it will implement the VBC work requirements (see Appendix C: Work Requirements) and achieve the performance goals set forth in this NOFO. 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.

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.A.—Evaluation Criteria—for a discussion of points associated with each element discussed in this section.) Applications that fail to include all the necessary elements (should be in the order outlined below) will not be reviewed or considered and will be disqualified.

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 VBC (MBDA - OBD – 2019 - 2006126) 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 – This section should not exceed 20 pages (this total does not include budget, budget narrative, or items noted under Required Applicant Attachments or any standard forms required) and 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.

(ii) Mission Alignment - The extent to which the mission of the applicant organization aligns with the objectives of the VBC.

(iii) Business Consulting - The applicant's knowledge of and experience with assisting businesses to grow as well as experience with delivery of business consulting services using online platforms and technology, strategic partners, and individualized one-on-one interactions/services. Provide two examples through client success stories (include description of challenge, action taken, and results) and two related customer satisfaction results/ reports.

(iv) Access to Contracts – The applicant's knowledge of and experience with assisting businesses to obtain upcoming contracting opportunities and process for matching the opportunities with the capabilities of the client. Discuss two cases or examples demonstrating experience in assisting clients to inform, prepare, and developing a proposal and competing and managing contracts. Provide a description of key professional working relationships and networks with potential sources of contracts that could be used to assist the VBC to deliver access to contract services. Additionally, provide examples of facilitating contract/procurement deals on behalf of firm clients through virtual/remote business matchmaking forums and/or teaming arrangements.

(v) Access to Capital/Financing - The applicant's knowledge of and experience with assisting businesses to obtain capital/financing. This may include descriptions of how a client firm was matched to different sources of capital/financing. Describe any key knowledge, technology or capabilities used to generate capital/financing success. Provide two cases or examples in assisting clients to evaluate capital/financing needs, preparation of financial statements or other activities used to apply or present to the capital/financing entity. Provide a description of key professional working relationships and networks with potential sources of capital/financing contracts that could be used to assist the VBC to deliver access to capital/financing. contract services. Additionally, provide examples of facilitating capital/financing deals on behalf of firm clients through virtual/remote assistance and/or matchmaking forums will be considered.

(vi) Key Staff - Qualifications and experience of proposed staff, including but not limited to, the VBC director and VBC business consultants. The applicant is encouraged to identify a proposed VBC director in the application. All VBC staff shall possess the ability to deliver and/or support the program services and fulfill the work requirements of this Announcement and must be experienced in using information systems. Position descriptions, qualification requirements, education requirements, and salary ranges must be provided for each proposed VBC 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.

(b) Resources

(i) Strategic Partners - The applicant's plans for leveraging existing and/or establishing partnerships that can provide services to minority businesses through the VBC platform. The applicant should provide a description of the scope and scale a partner will provide the VBC to implement services and meeting performance goals. The applicant should indicate whether and how the partnerships will be used to assist clients with online tools, matchmaking to contract or financing opportunities, securing contracts or financing, achieving growth (size and scale), or providing referrals to other services. A description of how the applicant will interact and coordinate with its partner(s) for successful client outcomes also will be considered.

(ii) Other Resources - Resources that will be used to implement the VBC in each of the four program years will be considered. Resources include, but are not limited to, leveraging different technology approaches including platform as a service, software as a service, continuous security and privacy monitoring, and other services that will assist the VBC to adhere to Federal technology, security and privacy standards, and possess the ability to maintain a strong security boundary that facilitates system-to-system interface with MBDA.

(iii) Infrastructure - The applicant must identify the physical location of equipment and hardware used to support VBC operations. The applicant should describe current and expected redundancies, such as emergency alternative sites to ensure VBC operations are maintained year-round (24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year). The application must include the applicant's plan to satisfy VBC information technology requirements, including computer hardware, software, creation and support of the VBC website and tools, and sharing of information with MBDA. (see Appendix E: Information Technology and Computer Requirements).

(c) Techniques and Methodologies

(i) Performance Measures - For each of the four funding periods, the applicant's techniques and methodology to be used in implementing the VBC will be considered, including the quarterly breakdown of the performance goals. 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 identify and address the needs of MBEs; and, how the applicant proposes to track client results/outcomes will be considered (see Appendix B: Performance Measures and Points). Please note that proposed deviations, either above or below, from the minimum Performance Goals outlined in this NOFO require justification.

(ii) Start-up Phase - The applicant's work plan for commencement of VBC operations within

the initial ninety (90) period will be considered. The VBC shall have 90 days to become operational after an award is made (see Appendix C: Work Requirements). The work plan must include significant implementation milestones, such as the hiring of key staff and the initiation of the VBC website and operations to serve clients.

(iii) Work Requirements Execution Plan - The applicant's description of VBC staff assignments, details about the approach methodology including technology platforms proposed, and system of operations, privacy plan, continuous monitoring for security and systems, relevant technology redundancies to ensure 24/7 operations; concept of service operations; description of the enterprise service architecture; description of capacity for system-to-system integration with MBDA's CRM Salesforce system (or other means for data sharing with MBDA that is compliant with Appendix E: Information Technology and Computer Requirements); and leveraging of strategic partner technology will be considered. Please note that the applicant must include a specific four-year plan-of-action detailing how the VBC work requirements will be met for each of the four funding periods (see Appendix C: Work Requirements).

A staff allocation chart for each of the four years must also be included as part of the work requirements execution plan. The staff allocation chart should include the staff title, role, full time/part-time status, and annual hours allocated to the VBC.

Note: the applicant must use an agile development methodology. The applicant will collaborate with MBDA on new development and system improvements throughout the award period. The applicant must include a description for how it will plan, develop, test, deploy, and conduct continuous improvement through its proposed sprint series.

VBC operating hours for customer response must be included in the proposal. Please provide a description of the VBC customer response operating hours and all scheduled holiday closures for each year of the anticipated four-year award period. It is recommended (although not mandatory) that the VBC customer response 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 four-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.

### 3) Budget and Budget Narrative

All VBC cost expenditures must 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 four years) and 424A (one for each of the four years).

(a) Budget Breakdown – The applicant must submit the SF-424 and initial breakout via the SF-424A form (non-construction, as appropriate). The applicant must indicate matching funds in the appropriate areas of the SF-424 and SF-424A. Costs must align and avoid rounding errors.

(b) Budget Narrative – The applicant must provide a narrative justification for all budget line items in sufficient detail to enable the proposal reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested. The budget justification must be broken-out and detailed using the same budget categories as the SF-424A. Costs must align. The budget narrative must also align with the proposed work activities, goals, staff plan and other proposed resources. Fringe benefits and other percentage calculations must match the SF-424A, for each proposal year.

The VBC program requires mandatory travel. The application must include travel costs for key personnel to attend the identified travel (see Appendix D: Training Requirements).

Reasonableness, Allowability, and Allocability of Proposed Program Costs - 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 VBC 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).

Non-Federal Cost Share in Excess of Minimum – MBDA has determined that additional resources allocated to the VBC can improve the services provided to MBEs. Applicants may propose non-Federal cost sharing in excess of the minimum amounts indicated in this

Announcement. An applicant will be issued additional “bonus” points to the final scoring (see Section V.A. Evaluation Criteria).

Applicants who decide to propose non-Federal cost share beyond the yearly minimum \$325,000 (i.e., 20% of total annual project costs) requirement may receive bonus points under the competitive evaluation process. Note: proposed non-Federal cost sharing beyond minimum must remain consistent for all four programs years in order to qualify for bonus points. Please ensure the application, budget narrative, and budget (SF-424As) include the share for all four years.

Performance-Based Budgeting – Applicants must ensure sufficient resources are provided to achieve VBC mission and minimum performance goals.

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

The Federal contribution to the budget is non-negotiable. The amount of Federal funds designated for the award in this NOFO 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). The applicant must budget accordingly for this requirement. If a venue for a training event is not stated (see Appendix D: Training Requirements), 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 1-4 be provided in the application. 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.

Program Income: As discussed in the NOFO (see Section III. B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement), the generation of program income is optional for the VBC and the VBC operator is required to account for all program income generated (if proposed) 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 VBC, program income specifically includes client fees, membership fees, and other income generated by the VBC. See, 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.80 and § 200.307.

For each of the four anticipated funding periods under the VBC award, applicants must identify:

- How non-Federal cost share will be generated by the VBC;
- A breakdown of the anticipated non-Federal cost sharing in the applicant's proposed budget;
- How the non-Federal cost sharing will be used to further the VBC objectives; and,
- Mandatory 20% (minimum) non-Federal cost share. Proposed methods for the VBC's generation of program income (if submitted) must be acceptable to MBDA and approved by the Grants Officer.

Note: The applicant should take care in projecting the total dollar amount in fees and other program income (if proposed) 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 VBC 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.

#### 4) Required Applicant Attachments

##### (a) Applicant Narrative and Narrative Support

##### (i) Online enterprise service architecture and map

##### (ii) Applicant organization chart;

##### (iii) Proposed VBC organization chart (include lines of reporting for the VBC director to the head of the applicant organization);

##### (iv) Scanned Letter of Commitment from the proposed VBC director (if applicable);

##### (v) VBC director resume and three (minimum) professional references must be provided (if proposed);

##### (vi) Resumes of other VBC staff (if applicable);

##### (vii) Position descriptions, qualification requirements, and salary ranges for all VBC staff;

##### (viii) 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;

##### (ix) Scanned Letter(s) of Commitment from strategic partners and other resources listed,

indicating their willingness to work with the applicant; and,  
(x) Quarterly breakdown of performance goals, one chart for each year (see Appendix A: Performance Goals).

(b) Applicant Budget and Budget Narrative Support

- (i) SF-424 — Application for Federal Assistance (one form to cover all funding periods);
- (ii) SF-424A — Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs (one form per funding year);
- (iii) SF-424B — Assurances-Non-Construction Programs;
- (iv) SF-LLL — Disclosure of Lobbying Activities;
- (v) CD-511 — Certification Regarding Lobbying; and,
- (vi) Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable).

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

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

- 1) Register in SAM before submitting an application;
- 2) Provide a valid unique entity identifier in the application; and,
- 3) 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 requirement 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

Applications must be submitted electronically via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) and received by MBDA by 11:59 p.m. EDT on July 26, 2019. Applications may be submitted starting from the publication date of the NOFO up to the deadline above. Applications received after this time will not be reviewed or considered for funding. Application must be submitted

electronically via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). The electronic submission will receive a date and time stamp at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) 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. Waiting to submit an application until the end of the competition period puts the application at risk; be sure to allow ample time.

#### E. Intergovernmental Review

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

#### F. Funding Restrictions

The successful applicant will have funding restrictions under the award.

- 1) Profits or Other Increments above Cost: Profits 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 that are established for all Federal assistance awards by the cognizant Federal agency. The Program Officer must consult with the Grants Officer and legal counsel at U.S. Department of Commerce before limiting indirect costs.

Indirect costs are those costs proposed for common or joint objectives and that 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 VBC 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 four 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 (Indirect) Cost Rate Agreement. Alternatively, if indirect costs are included but the applicant that does not have a current Facilities and Administrative (Indirect) Cost Rate Agreement negotiated and approved by the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) (or by the applicable cognizant Federal agency), please provide a statement to this effect. The applicant must prepare and submit a 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 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 DOC (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).

The successful applicant is expected to understand and adhere to regulations pertaining to use of Federal funds.

#### G. Other Submission Requirements

The time it takes to completely upload an application will vary depending on a number of factors, including the size of the application file, the speed of the applicant’s Internet connection, and the time it takes [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) to process the application. If

www.grants.gov rejects the application, the applicant must resubmit the entire application and receive a 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 Announcement.

1) 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. Information about the registration process can be found at [http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get\\_registered.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp).

Before applying, your organization needs to register with Grants.gov, which requires appointing one or more Authorized Organization Representatives (AOR). 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 within the authority to submit applications for your organization. Your organization may authorize multiple AORs for www.grants.gov purposes. Below are instructions for registering as an organization.

2) Electronic Submission – The electronic submission date is the date that applications have been submitted electronically and received by www.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/on 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 applicant must ensure it obtains and documents a case number regarding the communication with www.grants.gov.

Important note: problems with an applicant organization's computer systems 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 email message from www.grants.gov are not considered "systems issue." A www.grants.gov "systems issue" is an issue occurring in connection with the operations of www.grants.gov system, such as the temporary loss of service by www.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 <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-tools-and-tips.html>.

3) 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](http://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).

Potential applicants should begin registration early, as the complete registration process takes between three business days and three weeks. Before applying for a funding opportunity, your organization needs to register with [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) and assign one or more AORs. We recognize registration activities take extra time; however, this is a part of the security process the U.S. Government must use to prevent fraud and abuse of funds. The [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) application process is outlined below.

Step 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).

Step 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).

Step 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).

Step 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).

Step 5 - Track AOR Status. Log in to Grants.gov and look at the Applicant welcome box for your current status (same day).

Step 6 - Download an application package. Use Funding Opportunity Number MBDA-OBDA-2019-2006126, and Download a Grant Application Package (same day).

Step 7 - Complete your application package. Write your proposal and fill out ALL the

required forms, fields, and certifications (allow 3 days).

Step 8 - Submit your application package via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). 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).

Step 9 - Track my application package. Enter the tracking number you received after Step 8 and click the "Submit Tracking Number(s)" button. Note, confirmation of successful submission may require 48 hours (allow 2 days).

All application materials and forms are available at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Additional competition material can be found on the MBDA internet Portal at [www.mbda.gov](http://www.mbda.gov)

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Evaluation Criteria

Application evaluations will be based on the following criteria:

1) Applicant Narrative (75 points) – This 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 NOFO (see above, Section IV – Application and Submission Information).

(a) Capability (30 points) – This subsection is comprised of the following: (i) Organizational Background and Knowledge (5 points); (ii) Mission Alignment (5 points); (iii) Access to Contracts (5 points); (iv) Access to Capital/Financing (5 points); (v) Business Consulting to Clients (5 points); and, Key Staff (5 points).

(b) Resources (15 points) – This subsection is comprised of the following: (i) Strategic Partners (5 points); Other Resources (5 points); and, Infrastructure (5 points).

(c) Techniques and Methodologies (30 points) – This subsection is comprised of the following: (i) Performance Measures (10 points); (ii) Start-Up Phase (10 points); and (iii) Work Requirements Execution Plan (10 points).

2) Budget and Budget Narrative (25 points) – This section will be evaluated on the criteria, and applicant will be selected, based on the level at which the proposal addresses the below listed evaluation criteria. Note, detailed cost proposal requirements are in the NOFO (see Section IV – Application and Submission Information).

(a) Reasonableness, Allowability, and Allocability of Proposed Program Costs (12.5 points)

(b) Performance-Based Budgeting (12.5 points)

3) Bonus Points (optional)

(a) Non-Federal Cost Share in Excess of yearly Minimum (10.0 points maximum)

(i) Value exceeding minimum cost share range of \$377,500 to \$489,999 (1.5 points)

(ii) Value exceeding minimum cost share range of \$490,000 to \$619,999 (3.0 points)

(iii) Value exceeding minimum cost share range of \$620,000 to \$784,999 (4.75 points)

(iv) Value exceeding minimum cost share range of \$785,000 to \$964,999 (6.5 points)

(v) Value exceeding minimum cost share range of \$965,000 to \$1,174,999 (8.25 points)

(vi) Value exceeding minimum cost share range of \$1,175,000 to \$1,300,000 (10.0 points)

(b) Supplier Diversity (5.0 points)

MBDA will award 5 bonus points to applicants that submit a plan for supplier diversity inclusion under this award. Supplier diversity is defined as a proactive business program that encourages the use of minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned, service-disabled-veteran-owned, historically underutilized business, and Small Business Administration (SBA)-defined small business concerns as suppliers. See, 13 CFR Part 121.

B. Review and Selection Process

(1) 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:

(a) The application is received after the closing date;

(b) The application package is not complete;

(c) The applicant's authorized organizational representative (AOR) fails to submit Standard Form 424 by the closing date; or

(d) The principal purpose of the activities in the application is to provide a direct benefit or service to MBDA; or

(e) The application does not provide for the operation of the VBC.

(2) MBDA Merit Review Panel

(a) 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. The panel also will include a Panel Chair who is an MBDA employee and who will not participate in the technical merit review of the applications. Each reviewer shall evaluate and provide a score for each proposal based on the criteria set out in this

Section (see Evaluation Criteria). The review panel may discuss the applications but will not reach a consensus on scores for each applicant. 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.

(b) Each application will be evaluated based on the criteria set out in the NOFO (see above, Section IV – Application and Submission Information and Section V-Evaluation Criteria) for a maximum of 115 points (including 15 bonus points). The Applicant Narrative section of the application will be eligible for a total of 75 points; the Budget and Budget Narrative section will be eligible for 25 points; and an optional bonus may be possible for 15 points.

### (3) Recommendation and Selection

(a) The Panel Chair will recommend to the Selecting Official an application for funding based on the merit review panel's ratings and the Panel Chair's reconciliation of outstanding issues, concerns, and inconsistencies within a proposal, such as clarifications and corrections. The Panel Chair will forward his/her recommendation and the rank order of applicants to the Selecting Official.

(b) The MBDA National Director is the MBDA Selecting Official and makes the final recommendation to the NOAA Grants Officer regarding the funding of applications under this Announcement. The Selecting Official may recommend funding for an application evaluated as meritorious based on the merit panel review ratings, and selection factors, including: the availability of funds; program priorities (see Section I.B); and MBDA priorities.

### C. Selection Factors

The MBDA National Director is the MBDA Selecting Official and makes the final recommendation to the NOAA Grants Officer regarding the funding of applications under this Announcement. The Selecting Official may recommend funding for an application evaluated as meritorious based on the merit panel review ratings, and selection factors, including: the availability of funds; program priorities (see Section I.B); and MBDA priorities.

### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Anticipated time for processing awards is ninety (90) days from the closing date for receipt of applications. MBDA anticipates that the VBC award will be made with a start date of

September 1, 2019. The successful applicant may be eligible for pre-award costs.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

The notice of award (CD-450) is executed by the U.S. Department of Commerce Grants Officer and is the authorizing document. It is generally provided electronically via the grants Online system to the AOR of the recipient organization. The AOR for the 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 not ultimately selected for funding will be retained by MBDA for a period of three (3) years after which they will be destroyed.

On occasion, competitive solicitations or competitive panels may produce less than optimum results, such as 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. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all U.S. 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 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at: <https://federalregister.gov/a/2014/12/30/2014-30297/departments-of-commerce-pre-award-notification-requirements-for-grants-and-cooperative-agreements>. Awards made under this announcement are subject to the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package.

This document can be found at:

[http://osec.doc.gov/oam/grants\\_management/policy/documents/Department%20of%20Commerce%20Standard%20Terms%20&%20Conditions%2031%20March%202017.pdf](http://osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/Department%20of%20Commerce%20Standard%20Terms%20&%20Conditions%2031%20March%202017.pdf)

Uniform Administrative requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements: Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

### C. Reporting

The VBC and MBDA share responsibilities to ensure program continuity. The VBC shall adhere to an annual report submission schedule, likewise MBDA/Grants Officer will adhere to a corresponding schedule that is responsive to the reports submitted by the VBC. The exchange of report and response between the VBC and MBDA/Grants Officer are critical to annual monitoring, and for renewing funding cycles under this Announcement. The following are the three reporting requirements under the VBC program for each performance period:

1) Monitoring and Advisement – VBC continued funding is subject to the terms and conditions as outlined in this NOFO. The VBC will provide data sharing via system-to-system interface to the MBDA CRM Performance system in real time or through other proposed and accepted process (see Appendix E: Information Technology Requirements). MBDA will regularly monitor the information provided by the VBC and track its ongoing performance. The VBC's performance measures are defined in this Announcement (see Appendix B: Performance Measures and Points).

2) Progress Reports – The VBC shall submit the following mandatory reports via Grants Online:

(i) Financial Reports – This report details the use of Federal funds and required non-Federal funds. Ideally, the successful applicant will contribute an equal percent of required non-Federal funds as to the percent of Federal funds withdrawn within a given period. The Financial Report must be submitted to the Department of Commerce via Grants Online forty-five (45) days after the end of each quarter. The final Financial report is due within ninety (90) days after expiration of the award.

(ii) Progress Reports – These reports are performance and performance narrative reports submitted twice per program year. The reports are submitted to the MBDA (Federal Program

Officer) via Grants Online. The reports are: mid-year – which is submitted within forty-five (45) days after the end of the second program quarter; and, the annual – which is due forty-five (45) days after the end of each funding period. MBDA shall review, assess, and issue service optimization points based on the information provided.

(iii) Additional reporting requirements are set forth in the NOFO (see Appendix B: Performance Measures and Points). Failure to submit reports on time may result in MBDA award enforcement action or delay in access to Federal funds.

3) Performance Evaluation - MBDA will conduct the following performance assessments for each program year:

| Performance Assessment | Operating Period          |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Semi-annual            | September 1 – February 29 |
| Cumulative year-end    | September 1 – August 31   |

These assessments are based on the VBC's timely submission of its required progress reports.

4) On-Site Reviews - MBDA may conduct an initial and periodic on-site assessment of the VBC operation center to verify the VBC's operations/performance/claims, including but not limited to a review of overall operations. MBDA may also conduct a review of reported assistance by surveying and/or interviewing the clients assisted by the VBC.

MBDA will assess the VBC's effectiveness in providing business development services to its online and consulting clients. MBDA will provide a report of findings and recommendations for improvement as a result of evaluations, monitoring visits, and surveys conducted. MBDA will approve qualifications of key VBC staff and respond to the VBC requests for MBDA action.

5) Program Consultation - MBDA may conduct a consultation with the VBC if it is operating at a performance level that is less than "Satisfactory." This consultation is designed to assist the VBC through collaborative support. The VBC may be required to develop a performance improvement plan based on MBDA's findings, suggestions, and recommendations. In addition, if the VBC is performing at an unsatisfactory level, it is subject to enforcement actions under the award, up to and including termination.

6) Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 Reporting: The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 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](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all sub-awards over \$25,000. Please see the OMB guidance published at 2 C.F.R. Part 170 and 200, which can be accessed at: [http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200_main_02.tpl).

7) 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 will be required in a format requested by NOAA before any award will be made under this NOFO.

8) General Program Requirements - The VBC is part of a broader MBDA Network and must be able to collaborate with both Agency staff and other MBDA funded projects. As a part of MBDA's business operations, the VBC shall accept client referrals from MBDA Headquarters and the MBDA Network. MBDA anticipates the VBC would provide services to those firms through virtual communications. Detailed program requirements are described in this Announcement (see Appendix C: Work Requirements).

## VII. Agency Contacts

Prospective applicants may contact:

Nakita Chambers  
Program Manager and Federal Program Officer  
Minority Business Development Agency  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W., Room 5067  
Washington, DC 20230  
Tel: 202-482-0065  
Email: [nchambers@mbda.gov](mailto:nchambers@mbda.gov)

General questions pertaining to the VBC and this announcement should go to:  
[nchambers@mbda.gov](mailto:nchambers@mbda.gov)

## VIII. Other Information

### A. Conferences

Applicants should include travel and registration expense to accommodate required travel for 2 individuals. The duration of travel is noted below.

1) Pre-Award Teleconference – MBDA will conduct a pre-application teleconference on June 20, 2019. The time of the teleconference is 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. EDT. Participants must register at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance of the teleconference. Please visit the MBDA Internet Portal at [www.mbda.gov](http://www.mbda.gov) to register and for additional information. Travel not required.

2) Post Award Teleconference – MBDA shall conduct mandatory post-award conferences to ensure that the VBC operator has a clear understanding of the program and its components. During the post-award conference, Federal officers will: (i) orient VBC operator and VBC staff; (ii) explain program reporting requirements and procedures; (iii) identify available resources that can enhance the capabilities of the VBC; (iv) provide detailed information about MBDA's Business Internet Portal and other online systems; (v) marketing and promotional; and (vi) branding and logo requirements. Travel is not required.

3) National Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week Conference – The VBC operator and designated VBC staff will be required to attend the MED Week Conference unless otherwise noted by MBDA. MED Week is a national recognition of the success and contributions of minority business enterprises to the U.S. economy. MED Week is proclaimed by the President of the United States. MBDA conducts an annual conference featuring workshops, seminars, business matchmaking activities that inform minority business attendees of new opportunities, and information related to contracts, capital and markets. MED Week also hosts a celebratory awards programs in recognition of MBE clients that have made significant economic impact and minority business advocates that have supported supplier diversity. The location of MED Week varies annually in major cities across the country. Travel is required, approximately 3 days.

4) MBDA National Conference (NC) – The VBC operators and designated VBC staff will be required to attend this event unless otherwise noted by MBDA. The NC convenes all MBDA sponsored programs, MBDA staff, and (on occasion) national stakeholders and partners to discuss relevant and key issues impacting minority businesses, programmatic training, and collaboration. The location of NC varies annually in major cities across the country. Travel is required, approximately 2-3 days.

#### B. Collaboration with MBDA

MBDA welcomes working collaboratively with the award recipient to better serve minority

businesses. The VBC and the VBC staff are encouraged to support MBDA by communicating the mission and values of MBDA to the minority business community. Collaboration with MBDA may include items such as: promotion of MBDA's mission, promotion of MBDA sanctioned events and conference, annual nomination of minority businesses for MED Week award recognition, inclusion of MBDA to VBC lead activities and initiatives, use of the MBDA designated logo and signage for VBC lead activities and website, regular submission of VBC success stories and/or profiles for MBDA social media promotion, and co-promotion of VBC and MBDA-lead activities. Collaboration also includes: acceptance of MBE referrals for service assistance from MBDA and the MBDA Network; sharing of service improvement plans, development and deployment to MBDA; acceptance of MBDA feedback pertaining to service improvement, development and deployment.

#### C. 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 U.S. 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 U.S. Department of Commerce awards to the recipient, changing the method of payment from advance to reimbursement only, imposition of other special award conditions, and suspension of and/or termination of any active U.S. Department of Commerce awards.

#### D. Limitation of Liability

In no event will MBDA or the U.S. Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. All funding periods under the award are subject to the availability of funds to support the continuation of the VBC. Publication of this NOFO does not obligate MBDA or the U.S. Department of Commerce to award any specific VBC or to obligate any available funds.

#### E. Review of Risk

After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the grants Office will perform administrative reviews. These may include assessment 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 the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency.

#### F. 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 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 \$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.

#### G. Right to Use Information

The U.S. Department of Commerce reserves the right to use information contained in applications submitted under this opportunity, as well as all reports and performance data submitted by the award recipient to undertake an evaluation of MBDA's programs, either through its staff or by hiring a third party. 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 U.S. Department of Commerce 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 with the U.S. Department of Commerce 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 the U.S. Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R.

§200.3030(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive persona or business information created or obtained in connection with a U.S. Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

MBDA may also share client information, client service information, and performance results with other Federal agencies in order to conduct research, performance and impact studies consistent with the MBDA mission, and its funded programs/projects. As such, all clients of the VBC must agree to the use of their information for statistical and program evaluation purposes at the onset of services provided.

#### H. 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.

#### I. Appendices to the NOFO and Program Requirements Documents

The VBC appendices are incorporated by reference into this Announcement. It is incumbent on all applicants to access and familiarize themselves with the information contained therein.

#### J. Trademark and Licensing

The VBC will receive guidance on all MBDA trademark and licensing requirements at the post award conference. Note, MBDA shall reserve exclusive rights in the naming convention, logo, phrases, and all associated marks and representations developed by MBDA.

#### K. Website and Naming Convention

The VBC shall propose the overall website design within the first 60 days of award. The creative look and design elements/themes are at the discretion of the grantee but must incorporate an MBDA approved or created logo and must receive approval from MBDA prior to launch. MBDA reserves the right to consult the VBC prior to its final decision of design.

The applicant must also propose the name of the virtual business center within 60 days of award. The naming convention should include either the “MBDA logo” and/or the Agency acronym (MBDA). The Agency reserves the right to provide feedback prior to approving the website name and any proposed name abbreviations. Additional information pertaining to website requirements are included in this NOFO (see Appendix E: Information Technology requirements).