

News Release

PRESS OFFICE

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SBA Announces Contracting Program

For Women-Owned Small Businesses

First Contracts Expected to be Awarded through WOSB Program

By Critical Fourth Quarter of Fiscal Year 2011

WASHINGTON – Women-owned small businesses can begin taking steps to participate in a new federal contracting program on Friday, Feb. 4, the U.S. Small Business Administration announced today. The new Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Federal Contract Program will be fully implemented over the next several months, with the first contracts expected to be awarded by the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2011.

“Implementing the Women-Owned Small Business contracting rule has been a top priority for the Obama Administration and SBA,” said Administrator Karen Mills. “Women-owned businesses are one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy. As we continue to look to small businesses to grow, create jobs and lead America into the future, women-owned businesses will play a key role. That’s why providing them with all the tools necessary to compete for and win federal contracts is so important. Federal contracts can provide women-owned small businesses with the oxygen they need to take their business to the next level.”

The WOSB Federal Contract Program will provide greater access to federal contracting opportunities for WOSBs and economically-disadvantaged women-owned small businesses (EDWOSBs). The Program allows contracting officers, for the first time, to set aside specific contracts for certified WOSBs and EDWOSBs and will help federal agencies achieve the existing statutory goal of five percent of federal contracting dollars being awarded to WOSBs.

On Feb. 4, SBA will release instructions on how to participate in the program, as well as launch the secure, online data repository for WOSBs to upload required documents, on its website: www.sba.gov/wosb. SBA will also release an application to become an SBA-approved third party certifier for this program on that date. This will be the first version of the application. SBA welcomes comments and suggestions on this first version of the application.

During the ramp up period over the next several months, SBA is encouraging small business owners to review program requirements and ensure their required documents are uploaded to the repository. WOSBs also will need to update their status in the Central Contractor Registration

(CCR) and the Online Representation and Certification Application (ORCA) to indicate to contracting officers that they are eligible to participate. The General Services Administration is currently updating these systems and they are expected to be completed in April, 2011.

Similarly, the WOSB rule in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), which is the companion to the SBA rule, is now going through final review, and is also expected to be issued by April. With these pieces in place, SBA expects to see the first contracts awarded through the program by the all-important fourth quarter, when the largest percent of federal contracts are awarded.

Every firm that wishes to participate in the WOSB program must meet the eligibility requirements and either self-certify or obtain third party certification. At this time, SBA has not approved any third party certifiers. Regardless of their certification method, WOSBs must also upload required documents proving their eligibility to a secure online data repository developed and maintained by SBA.

To qualify as a WOSB, a firm must be at least fifty-one percent owned and controlled by one or more women, and primarily managed by one or more women. The women must be U.S. citizens and the firm must be considered small according to SBA size standards. To be deemed “economically disadvantaged”, a firm’s owners must meet specific financial requirements set forth in the program regulations.

The WOSB Program identifies eighty-three four-digit North American Industry Classification Systems (NAICS) codes where WOSBs are underrepresented or substantially underrepresented. Contracting officers may set aside contracts in these industries if the contract can be awarded at a fair and reasonable price, the contracting officer has a reasonable expectation that two or more WOSBs or EDWOSBs will submit offers for the contract and the anticipated contract price is not greater than \$5 million for manufacturing contracts and \$3 million for other contracts.

Each stage of implementation is part of SBA's mission to make the Program efficient and user-friendly, and to ensure its benefits go only to qualifying WOSBs. SBA is excited to launch this new program to provide WOSBs with increased opportunities to compete for and win federal contracts, ultimately helping WOSBs create and retain more jobs.

For more information on the Women-Owned Small Business Program or to access the instructions, applications or database, please visit www.sba.gov/wosb.

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