U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20416

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

Date: January 31, 2011

To: Chief Acquisition Officers
Senior Procurement Executives
Agency Small Business Directors
White House Office of Public Engagement

From: Karen G. Mills

Subject: Roll-out of Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract Program

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On October 7, 2010, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) published a final rule, effective February 4, 2011, to expand federal contracting opportunities for women-owned small businesses (WOSBs).

Over the past few months, SBA has been working diligently to develop the processes and technology required to implement this program. We are excited to make this program a reality for the many women-owned small businesses that have waited over a decade for this program to move forward. We are equally pleased to provide the acquisition workforce with a tool that can them help meet the statutory goal of 5% of federal contract dollars being awarded to WOSBs.

To participate in the program, WOSBs must meet specific criteria and either self-certify their status or be certified by an SBA-approved third party certifier. Regardless of their certification method, WOSBs must also upload required documents to a secure data repository developed and maintained by SBA. WOSBs will be able to grant contracting officers access to review their documents.

On February 4, SBA will release specific instructions for WOSBs on how to participate in the program. We will also launch the data repository for WOSBs to begin uploading their required documentation. Further, we will release the application and agreement to become an SBA-approved third party certifier on that date. Please note that at this time, no third party certifiers have been approved by SBA. This will be the first version of the application and agreement. SBA welcomes comments and suggestions on how to improve the process and will refine the agreement over time. We plan to open the third-party certifier application process every six months. A list of approved third party certifiers will be posted online at www.sba.gov/wosb after they have been approved.

WOSBs will also need to update their status in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) and make the necessary representations in the Online Representation and Certification Application (ORCA) to indicate to contracting officers that they are eligible to participate in this program. The General Services Administration is currently in the process of updating these systems and is expected to complete these updates 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 the

final review, and is also expected to be issued by April. That means that all the pieces will be in place in time for the all-important fourth quarter, when the largest percent of federal contracts are awarded.

As with any new program, there will be a ramp-up period before the impact of this program is realized. In the second and third quarters of fiscal year 2011, SBA, in collaboration with the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP), the Defense Acquisition University and the Federal Acquisition Institute, will be conducting a number of training and outreach events to ensure WOSBs and contracting officers are fully trained on program requirements and how to use the new repository and system updates. We anticipate that contracting officers will begin using this program in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2011. We plan to make sure that all the necessary training and support are in place to make the roll-out successful and effective.

Again, SBA are excited to launch this new program to provide WOSBs increased opportunities to compete for and win federal contracts and are deeply committed to ensuring this program is a success. Please contact Michele Chang via email at michele.chang@sba.gov, or phone at (202) 205-6464 if you have any questions, comments or suggestions about the program.

We appreciate your support for this important effort.