

Programs." SBA has promulgated regulations spelling out its obligations under that Executive Order. See 13 CFR part 135, effective September 30, 1983.

In accord with these regulations, specifically 135.4, SBA is publishing this notice to provide public awareness of the pending application of twenty-three existing Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) for refunding. Also, published herewith is an annotated program announcement describing the SBDC program in detail.

This notice is being published three months in advance of the expected date of refunding these SBDCs. Relevant information identifying these SBDCs and providing their mailing address is provided below. In addition to this publication, a copy of this notice is being simultaneously furnished to the affected State single point of contact which has been established under the Executive Order.

The State single point of contact and other interested State and local entities are expected to advise the relevant SBDC of their comments regarding the proposing refunding in writing as soon as possible. The SBDC proposal cannot be inconsistent with any area-wide plan providing assistance to small business, if there is one, which has been adopted by an agency recognized by the State government as authorized to do so. Copies of such written comments should also be furnished to Ms. Johnnie L. Albertson, Associate Administrator for SBDC Program, U.S. Small Business Administration, 409 Third Street, SW., Suite 4600, Washington, DC 20416. Comments will be accepted by the relevant SBDC and SBA for a period of 90 days from the date of publication of this notice. The relevant SBDC will make every effort to accommodate these comments during the 90-day period. If the comments cannot be accommodated by the relevant SBDC, SBA will, prior to refunding the SBDC, either attain accommodation of any comments or furnish an explanation of why accommodation cannot be attained to the commentor prior to refunding the SBDC.

#### *Description of the SBDC Program*

The SBDC operates under the general management and oversight of SBA, but with recognition that a partnership exists between the Agency and the SBDC for the delivery of assistance to the small business community. SBDC services shall be provided pursuant to a negotiated Cooperative Agreement with full participation of both parties.

SBDCs operate on the basis of a state plan to provide assistance within a state or designated geographical area. The

initial plan must have the written approval of the Governor. As a condition to any financial award made to an applicant, non-Federal funds must be provided from sources other than the Federal Government. SBDCs operate under the provisions of Public Law 96-302, as amended by Public Law 98-395, a Notice of Award (Cooperative Agreement) issued by SBA, and the provisions of this Program Announcement.

#### *Purpose and Scope*

The SBDC Program is designed to provide quality assistance to small businesses in order to promote growth, expansion, innovation, increased productivity and management improvement. To accomplish these objectives, SBDCs link resources of the Federal, State, and local governments with the resources of the educational system and the private sector to meet the specialized and complex needs of the small business community. SBDCs also coordinate with other SBA programs of business development and utilize the expertise of these affiliated resources to expand services and avoid duplication of effort.

#### *Program Objectives*

The overall objective of the SBDC Program is to leverage Federal dollars and resources with those of the state, academic community and private sector to:

- (a) Strengthen the small business community;
- (b) Contribute to the economic growth of the communities served;
- (c) Make assistance available to more small businesses than is now possible with present Federal resources;
- (d) Create a broader based delivery system to the small business community.

#### *SBDC Program Organization*

SBDCs are organized to provide maximum services to the local small business community. The lead SBDC receives financial assistance from the SBA to operate a statewide SBDC Program. In states where more than one organization receives SBA financial assistance to operate an SBDC, each lead SBDC is responsible for Program operations throughout a specific regional area to be served by the SBDC. The lead SBDC is responsible for establishing a network of SBDC subcenters to offer service coverage to the small business community. The SBDC network is managed and directed by a full-time Director. SBDCs must ensure that at least 80 percent of Federal funds provided are used to provide

services to small businesses. To the extent possible, SBDCs provide services by enlisting volunteer and other low cost resources on a statewide basis.

#### *SBDC Services*

The specific types of services to be offered are developed in coordination with the SBA district office which has jurisdiction over a given SBDC. SBDCs emphasize the provision of indepth, high-quality assistance to small business owners or prospective small business owners in complex areas that require specialized expertise. These areas may include, but are not limited to: management, marketing, financing, accounting, strategic planning, regulation and taxation, capital formation, procurement assistance, human resource management, production, operations, economic and business data analysis, engineering, technology transfer, innovation and research, new product development, product analysis, plant layout and design, agri-business, computer application, business law information, and referral (any legal services beyond basic legal information, and referral require the endorsement of the State Bar Association) exporting, office automation, site selection, or any other areas of assistance required to promote small business growth, expansion, and productivity within the State. The SBDC shall also ensure that a full range of business development and technical assistance services are made available to small businesses located in rural areas.

The degree to which SBDC resources are directed towards specific areas of assistance is determined by local community needs, SBA priorities and SBDC Program objectives and agreed upon by the SBA district office and the SBDC.

The SBDC must offer quality training to improve the skills and knowledge of existing and prospective small business owners. As a general guideline, SBDCs should emphasize the provisions of training in specialized areas other than basic small business management subjects. SBDCs should also emphasize training designed to reach particular audiences such as members of SBA priority and special emphasis groups.

#### *SBDC Program Requirements*

The SBDC is responsible to the SBA for ensuring that all programmatic and financial requirements imposed upon them by statute or agreement are met. The SBDC must assure that quality assistance and training in management and technical areas are provided to the State small business community through the State SBDC network. As a