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Chadrad Communications, Inc.
226 Bordeaux St - Chadron, NE 69337
308-432-5545 fax 308-432-5601
E-mail: kcsr@chadrad.com



(Regional)-SBA Announces Changes To Contracting Program For Women-Owned Small Businesses



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 04/22/2013 10:11 AM

(WASHINGTON, D.C.)-Women-owned small businesses will have greater access to federal contracting opportunities as a result of changes included in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013 (NDAA) to the U.S. Small Business Administration's Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract Program.

"This new law is a prime example of how the Obama Administration is embracing a more inclusive view of entrepreneurship, helping small businesses and America succeed," said SBA Administrator Karen Mills. "Today, women own 30 percent of all small businesses, up from just 5 percent 40 years ago. As one of the fastest growing sectors of small business owners in the country, opening the door for women to compete for more federal contracts is a win-win."

The NDAA removes the anticipated award price of the contract thresholds for women-owned small businesses (WOSB) and economically disadvantaged women-owned small businesses (EDWOSB) to allow them greater access to federal contracting opportunities without limitations to the size of the contract.

Prior to the new law, the anticipated award price of the contract for women-owned and economically disadvantaged women-owned small businesses could not exceed \$6.5 million for manufacturing contracts and \$4 million for all other contracts.

The Women's Federal Contract Program allows contracting officers 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.

The law also requires the SBA to conduct another study to identify and report industries underrepresented by women-owned small businesses. As a result, more eligible women-owned businesses may be able to participate in SBA's Women's Federal Contract Program and compete for and win federal contracts.

The SBA is working with the Office of Federal Procurement Policy under the President's Office of Management and Budget on the implementation including changes to the Federal Acquisition Regulations.

Every firm that wishes to participate in the WOSB program must meet the eligibility requirements and either self-certify or obtain third party certification. There are four approved third-party certifiers that perform eligibility

exams: El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, National Women Business Owners Corporation, U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce, and the Women's Business Enterprise National Council. Additional information and links about approved third-party certifiers are available at www.sba.gov/wosb.

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 and the contracting officer has a reasonable expectation that two or more WOSBs or EDWOSBs will submit offers for the contract.

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

--U.S. Small Business Administration