
SBA To Begin Accepting Online Applications for Small Business Mentor-Protégé Program

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SBA will begin accepting applications for its more expansive Small Business Mentor-Protégé Program on October 1, 2016 via a specifically designated SBA website.

On July 25, 2016, the Small Business Administration (SBA) established a new government-wide mentor-protégé program for *all* small businesses, covering Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) businesses, Women-Owned Small Businesses (WOSB), Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned small businesses (SDVOSB), and other small businesses generally. See 81 Fed. Reg. 48558. The new program expands mentor-protégé access to a wider community of federal contractors than the pre-existing SBA 8(a) Business Development program, which the SBA will continue to operate separately.

More recently, the SBA has announced it will process, evaluate and monitor applications under the new program through SBA's headquarters in Washington, D.C. via an online web portal. As part of the new centralized process, prospective participants must submit their applications using the website certify.sba.gov, which will open for application submissions on October 1, 2016.

Benefits of the Mentor-Protégé Program

Under the current 8(a) Business Development mentor-protégé program, joint ventures between the mentor and protégé enjoy a general exception from the SBA's affiliation rules. The expanded program applies this affiliation exception to all approved small business mentor-protégé joint ventures. Thus, this newly created program enables all contractors to pursue previously unavailable acquisition opportunities.

The benefits of a mentor-protégé joint venture are substantial. The small business can receive significant business development assistance from its mentor, including training, development of business systems and financial assistance. Moreover, by aggregating its experience and capabilities with a mentor who is a larger contractor, a small business is able to pursue higher dollar-value, more complex contracts. Large businesses, on the other hand, will gain access to compete for work opportunities that are otherwise restricted exclusively to small business concerns. Large business mentors can also invest in the small business protégé without creating affiliation.

How to Apply

Applicants are required to sign up through the certify.sba.gov website. The SBA is only accepting applications for the new program through this specifically designated web portal. The SBA will not accept hard copy submissions.

In order to complete the application, an applicant must first be registered in the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#). Whether a prospective protégé or mentor, all applicants must complete an online training module and upload a certificate of completion in order to complete the application process. In addition, applicants must upload signed Mentor-Protégé agreement(s), size determination letters, and other required documentation to the online web portal. Although mentors need not provide financial statements and tax returns at the time of application, SBA has reserved the right to request such documentation at a later date.

Availability

The SBA will start accepting applications for the new Small Business Mentor-Protégé Program via the online portal on October 1, 2016. Because of the anticipated flood of mentor-protégé applications, we recommend that a small business file its application on the morning of October 1, 2016. Given the time needed to establish a mentor-protégé relationship and to prepare the required application documentation, as well as perform the normal flurry of end-of-fiscal-year activities, we recommend that small and large contractors begin preparing promptly for this significant contracting opportunity.

If you have any questions about the content of this Alert, please contact the Pillsbury attorney with whom you regularly work, or the authors below.

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