



U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
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SBA Success Story

Fort Walton Beach Small Business Overcomes Today's Economic Challenges Through Government Contracting

JACKSONVILLE, Fla.- HX5, LLC was established in Fort Walton Beach, FL in 2004, by Margarita “Margie” Urbietta Howard, to provide Professional Management, Technical and Business Services. HX5 began as a small, woman-owned disadvantaged business with limited revenue the first three years in business.

Ms. Howard decided to explore government contracting opportunities as a vehicle to grow her business. Ms. Howard met with Laura Subel, the Florida Small Business Development Center Network’s Procurement Technical Assistance (PTAC) State Program Manager, to seek assistance with the application for SBA’s 8(a) certification. Due in large part to Ms. Subel’s assistance, Ms. Howard was able to successfully apply for and obtain 8(a) certification in a timely manner. As soon as HX5 became a certified 8(a) business, the firm received a \$3.5 million services contract from the Engineering Research and Development Center (ERDC), Vicksburg, MS. to provide a full range of professional technical and business services that directly support of the center’s advanced, cutting-edge research and development activities.

SBA has helped thousands of aspiring entrepreneurs over the years to gain a foothold in government contracting through the 8(a) Business Development Program. Participation is divided into two phases over nine years: a four-year developmental stage and a five-year transition stage. For more information on the 8(a) program, please visit <http://www.sba.gov/businessop/programs/8a.html> or contact the SBA North Florida District office at (904) 443-1900.

Ms. Howard, HX5 President and CEO, had over 20 years experience supporting government and commercial organizations, but the information obtained from the PTAC enhanced the company’s understanding of specific SBA small business programs and opportunities through programs such as the 8(a) Business Development, HUBZone and Veteran initiatives. Ms. Howard continued to take advantage of the one-on-one counseling sessions at the PTAC to answer questions regarding doing business with federal, state and local governments.

In 2007, HX5 had 3 employees and presently has over 90 employees potential for more beyond its present numbers through new and upcoming opportunities in late FY '09 and early FY'10. In 2007, the company’s revenues were \$103,903; in 2008, revenues had increased to over \$2 million and, in 2009, revenues are well on track to far exceed the previous year’s revenue. As a result of the 8(a) certification and Ms. Subel’s assistance, HX5 was able to accomplish this phenomenal growth within a year of its 8(a) certification. HX5 has continued to obtain new government work by marketing customers and successfully competing for work solicited by the government, not only within the 8(a) business classification, but outside of it as well. Ms. Howard described Ms. Subel’s help as “immeasurable” and her contributions as “instrumental” to the success that HX5 has achieved.

HX5 is currently performing on several professional services government contracts and, since receiving 8(a) certification, the total current government contract awards won by HX5, to include both 8(a) and non-8(a) awards, totals in the millions per year. Ms. Howard believes the success achieved is a direct result of the tremendous assistance received from PTAC.

HX5 sets a great example for small businesses: It is a good investment to seek expert advice from small business resources, such as the PTAC and the SBA that are available (at no cost) to all small business owners. *For more information on the different loan programs provided by SBA, please visit www.sba.gov.*

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