



# NEWS RELEASE

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### ***SBA INTRODUCES ONLINE BUSINESS ‘GATEWAY’ TO INCREASE FEDERAL CONTRACTS TO HUBZONE BUSINESSES***

**WASHINGTON** – Thanks to a new online portal installed this month on the U.S. Small Business Administration’s award-winning Web site, contracting officers government-wide now have access to a powerful search engine that instantly provides the names and capabilities of certified HUBZone small businesses.

On June 15, SBA’s HUBZone Empowerment Contracting program introduced the online business tool, officially titled the Contracting Officer’s HUBZone Gateway. The Gateway is an extension of SBA’s Pro-Net database designed to link contracting officers with HUBZone firms and the estimated \$200 billion-per-year federal contract marketplace.

Like Pro-Net, the Gateway will help the more than 3,000 small businesses certified as HUBZone companies use the database to market their capabilities to government agencies and allow contracting officers to fill contracts.

**“The Gateway comes at a time when we are stepping up our efforts to become more customer service oriented,”** said William Fisher, acting associate deputy administrator for government contracting and business development.

**“We continue to explore ways to streamline the processes associated with the federal government’s acquisition of goods and services from small businesses. By providing federal contracting officers and small businesses with a direct link to expanded information about HUBZone businesses, we have provided another powerful marketing tool for the companies and an accessible source identification tool for federal buyers.”**

Contracting officers will be able to use the Gateway’s search engine to find:

- Certified HUBZone businesses with specific qualifications;
- Certified HUBZone businesses in a specific geographical location; and
- Non-manufacturers (retail and resellers) that are available for contracts at or below \$25,000, a special area of consideration for HUBZone companies.

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The HUBZone Gateway piggybacks on the debut this spring of the revamped online HUBZone application. It features a streamlined presentation with pop-up menus directing applicants to an online guide to the actual regulations. Another part of the system allows a computer user who has submitted an application to check its status at any time during the review process.

Both the HUBZone Gateway and the revised application are available at [www.sba.gov/hubzone](http://www.sba.gov/hubzone).

The HUBZone Gateway is another in a series of online tools and specialized assistance offered to federal contracting officers who are pivotal to the program's success.

Besides the Gateway, the SBA is currently hosting a year-long schedule of HUBZone procurement training sessions. Federal buyers can learn about the program's development, and tips for incorporating the program into a daily purchase routine. Twelve sessions have been completed, with at least seven more scheduled around the country. The SBA also has conducted, at the request of specific agencies and procurement training seminars, a number of one and two hour sessions. This is supplemented by a procurement presentation easily available on the program's Web site.

The HUBZone Empowerment Contracting program refers to Historically Underutilized Business Zones and was created in 1997 as a result of legislation sponsored by Senator Christopher 'Kit' Bond, the ranking member of the Senate Small Business Committee. The federal government has a two percent goal of channeling federal contracts through the HUBZone program, which equates to about \$4 billion in fiscal 2001.

For a small business to be HUBZone certified, its principal office must be located in a HUBZone and at least 35 percent of its employees must reside in one of these specially designated areas. Additionally, the firm must be owned and controlled by U.S. citizens, a community development company or Indian tribe.

Participants in the program can receive contracts through competition limited to qualified HUBZone firms, or on a sole-source basis. HUBZone firms are also given a price preference in bidding during full and open competition over non-HUBZone large firms.

Nationally, HUBZones are located in more than 7,000 urban census tracts, in 900 rural counties and on every federally recognized Native American reservation.

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