U.S. Small Business Administration
Office of Government Contracting and Business Development

Supplemental Workbook

Module 1
Setting Expectations
Pre-8(a) Business Development Program
Training Series

September 2012
This is an introduction to the 8(a) Business Development Program.

Welcome to Module 1, Setting Expectations. This is the first module in a four-part, Pre 8(a) Business Development Program, training series.

**NOTE:** This supplemental workbook tracks the slides and narrative contained in Module 1, Setting Expectations. It is the first course in a four-part, Pre-8(a) Business Development Program training series. The online version of the training program, with audio can be accessed at: www.sba.gov/gcclassroom. For the user’s convenience, all hyperlinks contained in the copied slides are included as links at the end of the workbook.
Introduction

• 8(a) Business Development Program is designed to assist socially and economically disadvantaged small businesses
• Four-module education series designed to inform, educate and engage qualified small firms in the 8(a) business development program

The 8(a) program is a popular federal business development program designed to assist socially and economically disadvantaged small businesses.

This four-part series is designed to inform, educate and engage qualified small firms in the 8(a) business development program.
Module 1, Setting Expectations. This module provides an overview of the 8(a) program, including a description of the program’s purpose, how it works, and eligibility requirements.

The remaining modules, when the series is complete, include information about federal contracting procedures and rules; how to market to the government and prime contractors to win contracts; sound proposal writing and pricing; and, business planning and operational management of an 8(a) participating firm.

In addition, in this module and other modules within the series, many of the slides include highlighted boxes with specific FAR and CFR regulatory references to help users easily access more information about the content in the slides.
Program purpose and summary.

Notes:
The 8(a) Program -- named for Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act -- is designed to assist small disadvantaged businesses compete in the marketplace. It is also designed to assist such companies in gaining access to federal and private procurement markets.

The primary focus of the program is to provide business development support, such as mentoring, procurement assistance, business counseling, training, financial assistance, surety bonding and other management and technical assistance to qualified firms. The ultimate objective, however, is to prepare small disadvantaged firms for procurement and other business opportunities.

Through the award of sole source and set-aside contracts, the 8(a) program provides market access and growth for qualified businesses.
The 8(a) Business Development Program:
• Established by:
  – Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act of 1953 (Section 204 of Public Law 100-656)
• Governed by:
  – 13 CFR 124.100–124.704 (Subpart A)
  – FAR Part 19.800–19.812

The 8(a) program was established by Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act of 1953, as amended by Section 204 of Public Law 100-656.

It is primarily governed by 13 CFR 124 Subpart A and FAR Parts 19.8 – 19.812.

Notes:
As articulated in statute and regulations, the key objectives of the 8(a) program are to promote business development of small business concerns owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals; to promote the competitive viability of such concerns; and to use the tools of the program to help qualified small disadvantaged firms benefit from federal procurement opportunities.
Clarification (of What the Program is Not)
Program Purpose & Summary

- Not a contracting program
- 8(a) program participants are not in any way guaranteed or entitled to receive federal contracts
- Program does support small disadvantaged firms with management and technical assistance to help them compete for contracts and other business opportunities

It is important to understand --- the 8(a) program is not a contracting program. Participants are not in any way guaranteed or entitled to receive federal contracts.

Rather, the program is designed to support small disadvantaged firms with various forms of management and technical assistance to enable them to successfully compete for contracts and other business opportunities. This is an important clarification.
The hallmark of the 8(a) program is business development assistance.

In addition, certified firms admitted to the program have the potential to receive sole-source contracts, up to $4 million for goods and services requirements and up to $6.5 million for manufacturing requirements. Firms are also allowed to form joint ventures and teams to bid on contracts, giving them greater flexibility to compete for larger prime contracts.

8(a) firms can also participate in the Mentor-Protégé Program, giving them the opportunity to learn the ropes from other experienced 8(a) businesses.
Participation in the 8(a) program is limited to 9 years, beginning from the date a firm is approved by the SBA as a certified 8(a) Business Development firm.

The first four years in the program are considered the developmental stage. The last five years in the program are considered the transitional stage.

Continuation in the program, in both the developmental and transitional stages, is dependent on the firm’s continuing eligibility as a socially and economically disadvantaged – owned and operated – firm and that the firm continues to be in compliance with the 8(a) business development agreement.
Conditions in which a firm may leave the 8(a) program are an important aspect of the program.

The maximum term of participation in the 8(a) program is nine years. Graduation from the program, refers to completing the goals and targets of the program within the nine-year term. Other conditions to leave the program include:

Voluntary withdrawal or voluntary early graduation. This refers to a participant’s decision to withdraw from the 8(a) program prior to its program term date.

Early graduation refers to a participant firm who has successfully completed the 8(a) program by substantially achieving the business targets, objectives, and goals as established in its business plan prior to the expiration of the term date. In addition, the firm has demonstrated the ability to compete in the market place without the assistance of the 8(a) Business Development Program. This action is typically initiated by the SBA.

Termination refers to a participant’s exit from the 8(a) program, prior to the 9-year program term. This condition is initiated by the SBA and can result from a variety of reasons, such as no longer meeting eligibility or other requirements of the program.
The 8(a) program is a business development program. As such, the overall goal for 8(a) firms is to graduate from the program and go-on to thrive in a competitive business environment. There are several requirements in place to help firms achieve this goal.

Firms must maintain a balance between their commercial and government business. There is also a limit on the total dollar value of sole-source contracts an 8(a) firm can receive while in the program. The limit is $100 million or five times the value of the firm’s primary NAICS code.

In addition, SBA district offices monitor and measure the progress of participating 8(a) firms. It does this through annual reviews, business planning collaboration and systematic evaluations. SBA’s role in this regard is discussed later in this course and in the other modules that compose this four part series.
How the Program Works
8(a) Business Development Program

Module 1 – Setting Expectations

How the program works.

Notes:
The program is driven by several key components. SBA plays a pivotal role, but the core of the program is focused on business development assistance, business development support, finding contract opportunities and marketing.

The most important role, however, is played by 8(a) firms themselves. Each of these components is explained in the following sections.
SBA’s Role
How the Program Works

- Program policy guidance
- Review and certify eligible clients
- Assign SBA personnel, *Business Opportunity Specialists*, to 8(a) participating firms
- Provide business development assistance
- Help identify contract opportunities for 8(a) participating firms
- Review progress of 8(a) certified businesses

As the administrator of the program, SBA provides program policy guidance, reviews and certifies eligible clients, assigns SBA personnel -- Business Opportunity Specialists -- to approved 8(a) firms, provides business development assistance, helps in identifying potential contract opportunities and reviews the progress of 8(a) companies.

SBA’s role is to build a strong resource-rich program -- that helps 8(a) firms become and remain competitive in the economic mainstream.

Notes:
## Business Development Assistance
### How the Program Works

- Business counseling and mentoring
- Online and traditional training
- Surety bond guarantees
- Contract marketing guidance
- Able to acquire federal government surplus property
- Other management and technical assistance

### Notes:

Aiding firms with business development assistance is the core of the program. This assistance takes many forms, but includes, business counseling and mentoring; online and traditional training; surety bond guarantees; contract marketing guidance; acquire federal government surplus property; and, other forms of management and technical assistance.

Competitive strength comes from knowledge, financial support and technical assistance – all of which can be gained through SBA’s business development initiatives.
Business Development Support
How the Program Works

• Helping firms:
  – register in the System for Award Management (SAM)
  – find contract opportunities
  – maintain a current business plan with a procurement strategy
  – and other support
• Working with agencies and prime contractors to direct contracts to small firms
• Assigning Business Opportunity Specialists (BOS) to work individually with participating 8(a) firms

Providing management, technical and financial assistance is one aspect of the program. Another key dimension is providing business development support to 8(a) clients. This SBA support is varied and can include:

Helping 8(a) program clients register in the System for Award Management or SAM, formerly known as the CCR--- which is a national database of firms seeking to do business with the federal government as well as prime contractors. SBA will also help firms to understand and use government tools to find contract opportunities, assists clients in developing and maintaining a current business plan with a defined procurement strategy, and provides assistance in many other ways.

Importantly, SBA also works with federal agencies and prime contractors ---- encouraging them to set aside, breakout or otherwise make contracts available to 8(a) and other small firms. In other words, SBA markets the technical capabilities of small businesses to federal buying entities.

In addition, each 8(a) firm is assigned a Business Opportunity Specialist by the SBA. The assigned specialist helps guide the 8(a) business during its tenure in the program. This direct assistance from the SBA is an integral part of the 8(a) Business Development Program.
The federal government buys in excess of $500 billion dollars in goods and services each year.

Government-wide procurement goals help define another aspect of the 8(a) program. Such goals establish procurement targets for agencies that benefit small disadvantaged businesses and other small firms.

SBA personnel, specifically Procurement Center Representatives, work closely with government and private organizations to identify procurement opportunities for small businesses and to help target specific acquisitions for 8(a) participating firms.

In addition, government policy and SBA staff encourage federal agencies to meet or exceed annual small business procurement goals. The current government-wide goal for prime and subcontracts to small disadvantaged businesses is 5%. Overall, however, the government-wide small business goal for all prime contracts is 23%.

Other government-wide procurement goals include: 5 percent of prime and subcontracts for women-owned small businesses; 3 percent of prime and subcontracts for Hubzone businesses and 3 percent of prime and subcontracts for service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses.
Role of Participating 8(a) Firms
How the Program Works

- SBA opens the door....
- 8(a) client firms must be competitive and market themselves competitively
- Successful 8(a) firms capitalize on available business development resources, educate themselves on government buying needs, and market themselves based on skills and ability to meet such needs

Finally, in describing how the program works, the most important role is played by the 8(a) firms, themselves.

SBA may be able to open some doors, but it is up to the 8(a) firms in the program to be competitive and to market themselves effectively.

It’s all about preparation and self-marketing. Successful 8(a) firms capitalize on available business development resources, educate themselves on government and corporate buying needs, and market themselves based on their skills and ability to support the procurement needs of multiple organizations.
Eligibility.

Notes:
Basic Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility

- Ability of the firm’s owners and managers to meet individual eligibility requirements
- Ability of the firm to meet business eligibility requirements
- Nature and structure of the business
- Potential for the business to perform successfully

13 CFR 124.101-124.112

Module 1 – Setting Expectations

A small business must be owned and controlled by a socially and economically disadvantaged individual or individuals to participate in the 8(a) program. There are, however, four fundamental considerations that define eligibility.

The first is the ability of the firm’s owners and managers to meet individual eligibility requirements. Second, is the ability of the firm to meet business eligibility requirements. The third requirement evolves around the nature and structure of the business. And finally, the fourth requirement focuses on the potential for the business to perform successfully. Taken together, the mix of these requirements defines 8(a) program eligibility.

Notes:
People presumed to be socially disadvantaged are individuals who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias because of their identification as a member of certain groups without regard to their individual qualities.

Notes:
Individuals are presumed to be socially disadvantaged if they are a U.S. citizen and a member of one of the following groups:
- Black American
- Asian Pacific American
- Hispanic American (includes individuals of Spanish & Portuguese decent)
- Native American
- Subcontinent Asian American

Individuals outside the noted presumed groups can be admitted to the program, but must demonstrate social disadvantage based on "preponderance of the evidence."

Evidence of individual social disadvantage must include: (1) at least one objective distinguishing feature that has contributed to social disadvantage, such as race, ethnic origin, gender, physical handicap or other feature that is not common to individuals who are not socially disadvantaged; (2) personal experiences of substantial and chronic disadvantage in American society; and, (3) negative impact on entry into or advancement in the business world because of the disadvantage.
Again, other individuals can be admitted to the program, if they can show through a “preponderance of the evidence” that they are disadvantaged.

Generally, preponderance is evidence of a quality and quantity which leads the decision maker to objectively conclude that the existence or truth of facts asserted is more probable than not.
The 8(a) program is not intended to benefit individuals who have accumulated significant wealth.

Persons considered to be economically disadvantaged are socially disadvantaged individuals whose ability to compete in the free enterprise system has been impaired due to diminished capital and credit opportunities.

Individuals with an adjusted personal net worth of $250,000 or greater, excluding the ownership interest in the applicant’s business, equity in their primary residence, or unavailable pension funds, will not be considered economically disadvantaged.

Notes:
To meet economic eligibility requirements for the program, a firm’s net worth must be less than $250,000 -- after excluding the individual’s equity in the firm, unavailable pension funds and equity in the primary residence.

This is an important aspect of the program.

To meet economic eligibility requirements for the 8(a) program, an individual’s adjusted net worth must be less than $250,000 -- after excluding the individual’s equity in the firm, unavailable pension funds and equity in the primary residence.
Other Factors
Eligibility – Economically Disadvantaged

- Individuals may not have excessive personal income or personal assets
- Individuals with an average three-year income over $250,000 are not considered economically disadvantaged
- Individuals with total personal assets over $4.0 million are not considered economically disadvantaged

13 CFR 124.104

Other factors are also considered in determining economic disadvantage. These factors include: individuals may not have excessive personal income or personal assets; individuals with an average two-year income over $250,000 are not considered economically disadvantaged; and, individuals with total personal assets over $4.0 million are not considered economically disadvantaged.

Notes:
Ownership and Control
Eligibility

- Persons or principals used to determine, socially and economically disadvantaged status, must be the direct and unconditional majority owners (at least 51%) of the applicant business
- Individuals used as the basis to determine program eligibility must also be engaged full time in the daily management and operation of the business

13 CFR 124.105-124.106

Persons or principals used to determine, socially and economically disadvantaged status, must be the majority owners, representing at least 51 percent of the applicant business. If the firm’s ownership structure is that of a partnership, limited liability company or corporation, there must be evidence showing that the individual or individuals representing at least 51% of ownership qualify as socially and economically disadvantaged.

Individuals used as the basis to determine program eligibility must also be engaged full time in the daily management and operation of the business.

Notes:
When reviewing eligibility requirements, specific to ownership and control, the disadvantaged individual used to determine eligibility must: hold the highest position of President or Chief Executive Officer, Managing Partner, or LLC Managing Member; be the highest compensated individual in the firm; have the ability to hire and fire employees, including the person with the critical license for the business; be responsible for setting policies; have the ability to commit the firm to contract obligations; and, have the ability to control the budget and financial disbursements.

Ownership and control -- eligibility factors - are carefully considered by the SBA when reviewing 8(a) client applications. A firm must meet these requirements to be eligible for the program.
Eligibility for the program requires applicants to be citizens of the United States.

In addition, firms applying to the program must meet specific small business size standards as established by the SBA and demonstrate sound management and technical experience in the firm’s field of business. Finally, unless waived, an applicant firm must have been in business for at least two years and the owner must have at least two years of experience in the field in which the firm seeks certification.
Only small businesses are eligible to participate in the 8(a) program.

An eligible 8(a) firm must be classified as a small business — in accordance with SBA’s size standards, based on its primary industry or NAICS code, including any business relationships or affiliates.

A firm’s size is determined either by the average of three years of revenues, if it’s a service or retail business, or by the average number of employees, if it is a manufacturer, dealer, wholesaler or construction firm.
In determining a firm’s eligibility or readiness for the 8(a) program, SBA evaluates the firm’s management capability and potential for success. As such, the applicant business must:

- be in operation for at least two years in its primary industry or field – as verified by revenues reported in federal tax returns in the last two years;
- show evidence of financial capability;
- be able to demonstrate sound management and technical experience;
- be able to show that it has performed well on previous contracts; and,
- must have the necessary personnel, licenses, certifications, facilities, equipment and other capacities to perform on future contracts.
Although there is a “two year rule” regarding eligibility, SBA may in some circumstances waive this rule and a business operating for less than two years can be approved for the 8(a) program. For a waiver to be granted, certain circumstances as described in the slide must be demonstrated to justify a waiver.
Deciding Factors – Good Character
Eligibility -- Citizenship, Size, Management & Time

What shows lack of good character...?
• Adverse information regarding possible criminal conduct by the applicant or its principals
• Violations of any SBA regulations
• Debarred or suspended individuals or firms
• Applicant firms and principals that lack business integrity as shown by an indictment, guilty plea or civil judgment
• Any principal who is incarcerated or on parole or probation
• Evidence that the firm knowingly submitted false information during the application process
• Any firm or any of its principals that fail to pay financial obligations to the federal government

SBA seeks well qualified and eligible businesses with good character to participate in the 8(a) program. Integrity of program participants is critical to the SBA and the U.S. taxpayer. As such, good character is a foundational component in determining a firm’s eligibility in the 8(a) program.

Lack of good character may be demonstrated in a variety of ways including: adverse information regarding possible criminal conduct by the applicant or its principals; violations of any SBA regulations; firms or individuals who have been debarred or suspended from federal contracting; individuals who have been indicted, entered a guilty plea or have a civil judgment against them; any principal who is incarcerated or on parole or probation; evidence showing that the firm knowingly submitted false information during the application process; and/or any firm or any of its principals that have failed to pay financial obligations owed to the federal government.

Notes:
Thank you for taking the time to learn about the 8(a) Business Development Program.

Much information has been discussed and we hope it is helpful. Please contact us with any additional questions you may have. In addition, this is the first module in a four-part Pre-8(a) Business Development Program, training series. Consider viewing all of the modules in SBA’s online Government Contracting Classroom, as they become available.

Thank you.