



## 2019 – The Best Year for Entrepreneurs

***By Ashley D. Bell, Regional Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration***

Why is 2019 YOUR year? Based on the success for entrepreneurs in fiscal year 2018, I would say that 2019 is looking to be filled with opportunities for small business. The numbers speak for themselves. The SBA backed nearly \$5.5 billion in loans to small business this past fiscal year in the Southeast Region (Region 4). The federal fiscal year runs October 1 through September 30<sup>th</sup>.

Of that \$5.5 billion in SBA loans that were approved for entrepreneurs across the Southeast last year:

- \$686 million in loans assisted women-owned businesses
- \$248 million in loans assisted Veteran-owned small businesses
- \$1.5 million in loans assisted minority-owned small businesses
- \$273 million in international loans went to small businesses to support import & export
- \$9.4 million in microloans assisted small businesses

These numbers represent the diversity in types of entrepreneurs the SBA supports. From start-ups to well established manufacturing companies, the SBA is supporting them through our flagship loan programs.

The SBA district offices along with our resource partners including Small Business Development Centers, Women’s Business Centers, SCORE Chapters and Veteran’s Business Outreach Centers provide an additional avenue of success for entrepreneurs. We continuously train and counsel over 200,000 small business owners in the Southeast Region every year. These trainings or counseling sessions often result in job creation, access to capital or result in success with government contracting. Take advantage of these professional, confidential resources that can help you every step of the way; at no cost! Let the SBA help you make 2019 exceptional.

Small businesses and their successes are celebrated throughout the year. Small Business Saturday, which occurs every year the Saturday after Thanksgiving, was another great event for small business owners. The total reported spending among U.S. consumers who said they shopped at independent retailers and restaurants on Small Business Saturday reached a record high of an estimated \$17.8 billion, according to data released from the 2018 Small Business Saturday Consumer Insights Survey from American Express and the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB). Based on this annual survey over the years, Small Business Saturday spending has now reached a reported estimate of \$103 billion since 2010. Entrepreneurs should want to be a part of this opportunity.

National Small Business Week also provides an opportunity for entrepreneurs to highlight their successes. The 2018 National Exporter of the year is SeaDek Marine Products from Rockledge, Florida, and the 2018 National Phoenix Award Winner (Disaster Recovery Award) was Forest Lake Fabric of Columbia, SC. National Small Business Week is celebrated the first week of May every year (May 5-11, 2019), but each district office is collecting nominations for several different categories from Small

Business Person of the Year, to Rural Entrepreneur of the Year and the top Exporter of the Year. There are over 20 categories to choose from. National Small Business Week award criteria is located [here](#) and please contact your local district office to learn about even more award categories that are specific to your area [here](#). The deadline to submit nominations is January 9<sup>th</sup>, so the time to nominate a deserving entrepreneur for an award is now.

As you can see, we have a lot to celebrate as we wind up 2018, and the future is looking extremely bright for 2019 for small business. We encourage you to learn how the SBA can help make your 2019 the best year yet. We look forward to celebrating you throughout the year!