



NEWS RELEASE

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New Online Application for SBA's 8(a) Program Will Make It Easier And Less Costly for Companies to Get Certification

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Small Business Administration today unveiled a new electronic online application that will make it easier, faster and less expensive for small companies to apply for 8(a) Business Development and Small Disadvantaged Business certification directly from SBA's Web site.

Announced today during a luncheon at Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week by SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto, the new automated application will substantially reduce the time and cost burdens imposed on small businesses applying for certification.

“The newly launched 8(a) on-line application will allow small businesses to apply for 8(a) and SDB certification directly from the SBA's Web site, and ensure more small businesses are able to successfully compete for federal contracting opportunities,” Barreto said. “This user-friendly application represents another accomplishment of this Administration in developing e-Gov tools that make access to information less cumbersome for small business.”

The SBA's 8(a) Business Development Program helps small businesses owned, controlled, and operated by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals by providing management, technical, financial and federal contracting assistance with the aim of helping these entrepreneurs create viable businesses. About 8,300 companies are presently certified in the 8(a) program. During FY 2003, \$9.56 billion in federal contracts were awarded to companies participating in the program.

The new automated application was developed by an 8(a) firm, Simplicity, Inc. in conjunction with the SBA's Office of Government Contracting and Business Development. It employs decision logic to screen applications allowing the SBA to review and process applications more efficiently and provide improved customer service. A demonstration of the application was given during the MEDWeek conference.

The application is 100 percent Web-based, allowing applicants to apply without downloading any software or plug-ins, replacing a four-page written application that required substantial supporting documentation. The online application incorporates features including context sensitive help, real-time validation, printer-ready versions and integrates with the Central Contractor Registry (CCR).

For more information, visit the SBA Web site at www.sba.gov.

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