



# BRINGING THE MESSAGE OF EXPORTING TO MINORITY BUSINESSES

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## Owning your own business is more than a full-time job.

And as small business owners, most of you are familiar with the hurdles to starting and staying in business. However, minority business-owners face more than the average business barriers. Access to basic business information, practical business training, capital and preconceived stereotypes are just a few of the obstacles these business owners must overcome in order to succeed. Entering the trade game simply adds another layer of difficulty. Fortunately, there are many community resources available that target all small businesses but specifically address the needs of minority-business owners.

Just as women today play a more important role in American business, minority-owned businesses have become one of the fastest-growing segments of the U.S. economy. According to recently released U.S. Census Bureau figures minority-owned businesses grew more than four times as fast as U.S. firms overall between 1992 and 1997, realizing more than 30 percent growth in those five years. Fifteen percent of all businesses in the United States are owned by minorities with nearly six percent owned by Hispanic Americans, over four percent by Asian Americans, another four percent by African Americans and one percent by American Indians.

The increase in minority-owned businesses has led to a proliferation of minority-owned business success stories. Businesses such as Sarian Bouma of Capitol Hill Building Maintenance, Don Williams of Princeton Healthcare, Inc. and Maria Sobrino of LuLu's Desserts, just to name a few. These and other success stories can be found by visiting the magazine's Web site and clicking on the link to "Success Stories". You may learn a great deal from their experiences or maybe even find your next business partner.

### MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Providing support and information to U.S. businesses on the benefits of global trade is a primary objective of the International Trade Administration (ITA). In fulfilling that goal, ITA employs a number of partners, including some of our sister agencies within the Department of Commerce. One such agency is the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), headed by Mr. Ronald Langston. Mr. Langston has been a vocal advocate of working with ITA and specifically, ITA's Under Secretary, Mr. Grant Aldonas. According to MBDA's stated vision, "the Minority Business Development Agency is dedicated to becoming an entrepreneurially focused and innovative organization, committed to empowering minority business

enterprises for the purpose of wealth creation in minority communities." ITA shares this vision and in a collaborative effort with MBDA seeks to promote job creation, economic growth, sustainable development and improved living standards for all Americans. ITA looks to provide a bridge between potential exporters and global markets — bringing buyers and sellers together.

Where MBDA seeks to educate and support minority businesses in becoming successful, stable and profitable businesses, ITA provides the network and assistance to these same businesses to pursue overseas markets. ITA and MBDA have worked together to formally coordinate the goals of each agency.



MBDA National Director Ron Langston answers questions during a recent press conference.

Photo courtesy of Department of Commerce

MBDA maintains a resource portal located on their Web site [www.mbda.gov](http://www.mbda.gov), which allows users to locate business resources in their communities. The site also gives advice and information to new businesses, home businesses, and small, medium and large businesses. Everything from alternative financing methods to industry trends is available on MBDA's site.

In addition to the informative web site, MBDA has a network of local offices, which provide grass-roots access to business development information. MBDA has five regional offices across the country and a network of Minority Business Development Centers. Minority businesses can receive hands-on technical assistance such as applying for loans and mechanizing a business.

To locate a regional MBDC, visit [www.mbda.gov](http://www.mbda.gov) and follow the link to "About MBDA."

### THE TRADE INFORMATION CENTER

The federal government also maintains a toll-free number that enables new-to-exporting businesses to speak to export counselors about getting started in exporting, filling out paperwork and researching potential markets. Additionally, the Trade Information Center's Web site ([www.export.gov/tic](http://www.export.gov/tic)) houses a wealth of information that will help any new business become familiar with the exporting process. The web site offers answers to frequently asked questions, country-specific information, tariff and tax information as well as the National Export Directory, which will help new businesses identify local resources. To reach a trade specialist, call (800) USA-TRAD(E).

### THE U.S. COMMERCIAL SERVICE

The U.S. Commercial Service is another International Trade Administration division, which has a network of domestic and international trade spe-

cialists equipped to provide counseling, research and support for businesses pursuing new markets. Commercial Service conducts seminars and educational events geared to minority business, such as the Global Diversity Initiative (GDI), that culminate in a trade promotion event that matches participants directly to foreign buyers.

The GDI is offered nation-wide and has ongoing programs. To find out more information or register for the next group of classes, contact your local export assistance center, a list of which can be found on the back cover of this magazine or visit [www.usatrade.gov](http://www.usatrade.gov).

### THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

When starting a new business, the Small Business Administration is a logical stop. SBA provides small businesses with the nuts and bolts of running a business, applying for funding, receiving counseling on marketing strategy and business plans and participating in workshops on a variety of topics. SBA is easily accessible through their web site and local offices. SBA administers an extensive network of Small Business Development Centers where new businesses can connect with the service corps of retired executives or SCORE. With more than 11,000 volunteer business counselors, SCORE provides small business mentoring and advice on a full range of business topics.

With so many federal, state and local resources available for businesses to get the facts on pursuing global markets, assistance is usually just a phone call away. ■

## ONLINE RESOURCES FOR MINORITY EXPORTERS:

### Export.gov

The Federal government's comprehensive Web site for information on trade <http://export.gov>

### U.S. Export Assistance Centers

[www.usatrade.gov](http://www.usatrade.gov)

### MBDA's Trade Portal

[www.mbda.gov](http://www.mbda.gov)

### Trade Information Center

[www.trade.gov/tic](http://www.trade.gov/tic)

### Small Business Administration

[www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

### Minority Business Entrepreneur

[www.mbemag.com/](http://www.mbemag.com/)

A bi-monthly magazine on minority and women-owned business. Table of contents, and subscription info.

### National Minority Business Council

[www.nmbc.org](http://www.nmbc.org)

The National Minority Business Council, Inc. (NMBC) has been helping small, minority- and women-owned businesses succeed for over a quarter century. Founded in 1972 as a full-service, non-profit (501)(c)(3) corporation, the organization is dedicated to providing business assistance, educational opportunities, seminars, purchasing exchanges, mentoring, business listings and related services to hundreds of businesses

### Minority Business News

[www.minoritybusinessnews.com](http://www.minoritybusinessnews.com)

America's monthly news source for information about minority business enterprise and diversity.