

PART 2000 - GENERAL

Subpart SSS - Memorandum of Understanding between the United States
Department of Commerce - Minority Business Development Agency
and the United States Department of Agriculture - Rural
Development

§ 2000.3501 General.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United States Department of Commerce, which establishes an increased working relationship between USDA Rural Development and the Department of Commerce Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA). The objective of this relationship is to enhance the economic well being and limited resources of minority populations and increase rural business financing for minority-owned rural firms and cooperatives in an effort to further expand and create new markets to provide jobs for rural Americans.

§ 2000.3502 Implementation.

The MOU is attached as Exhibit A of this subpart.

§§ 2000.3503 - 2000.3600 [Reserved]

Attachment: Exhibit A

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DISTRUBUTION: WSAL

ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

I. Purpose and Basis for this Memorandum of Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding ("Agreement") formalizes a relationship between the United States Department of Commerce - Minority Business Development Agency ("MBDA") and the United States Department of Agriculture - Rural Development (hereinafter collectively referred to as "the Parties").

This Agreement establishes guidelines for an increased working relationship between the United States Department of Commerce - Department Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) and the United States Department of Agriculture - Rural Development. The objective is to enhance the economic well-being and limited resources of minority populations and increase rural business financing for minority-owned rural firms and cooperatives in an effort to further expand and create new markets to provide jobs for rural Americans.

Through this Agreement, the Parties will work together to provide information to MBDA's funded network about opportunities for business financing and technical assistance in rural areas, and the entire range of Rural Development business programs to bring economic opportunities to under-served rural residents and firms (such as those in areas of persistent poverty or declining population, affected by natural disasters or Federal actions); areas designated by the government as priority areas and economic zones (including Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and Rural Economic Area Partnerships, the Lower Mississippi Delta and the Native American Initiative); minority and women-owned businesses, and businesses that support small and limited resource farmers. The parties will work together to identify ways for improving delivery of Rural Development programs, including efficient customer service through USDA's Rural Development State Offices and its network of other field offices.

II. USDA-Rural Development

Rural Development administers a variety of programs to help create jobs and stimulate rural economies by providing financial assistance and advisory services to rural businesses and cooperative organizations. These programs are delivered through 47 Rural Development State Offices and a network of other field offices. Rural Development is interested in partnering with MBDA to provide business and economic opportunities to minority owned businesses in rural communities.

III. Commerce-MBDA

MBDA is the only Federal entity created specifically to foster the creation, growth and expansion of minority-owned businesses in the United States and U.S. territories in accordance with Executive Order 11625. MBDA is within the United States Department of Commerce and is an entrepreneurially focused and innovative organization, committed to empowering minority business enterprises for the purpose of wealth creation in minority communities. MBDA, through its nationwide network of Centers, provides management assistance to minority-owned firms to obtain contract and financial transactions

IV. Duties and Responsibilities of Rural Development

Rural Development will provide the following to MBDA:

- Identify ways to improve delivery of Rural Development business programs through USDA's Rural Development State Offices to increase rural business financing and cooperative technical assistance for minority-owned rural businesses. Rural Development will identify Rural Development's point of contact to address program questions.
- Identify partnering opportunities to provide management and technical assistance through USDA's grant programs and MBDA's funded projects.
- Information for use on MBDA's Portal which outlines the Department of Agriculture programs available to minority-owned rural firms.
- Information and access to the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Utilization at the Department of Agriculture on ways of increasing finance, cooperative advisory services, and contract opportunities for minority-owned rural firms.
- Quarterly presentations at MBDA's staff meetings held in Washington. This should include finance and contract opportunities and information to the minority business community that can be disseminated through MBDA's funded programs.

- A presentation at MBDA's National Conference which will be held in San Diego, CA on June 15 -18, 2004 and others as scheduled. The specific time and location of the presentation shall be provided by MBDA to Rural Development in the near future. The presentation shall provide background information about Department of Agriculture, Rural Development business programs that are relevant to minority businesses.
- An in-depth workshop at MBDA's National Conference, geared towards training specific Minority Business Development Center staff in the availability of Rural Development programs that may assist in increasing business growth and the technicalities of how the programs work.
- Presentations at MBDA's National MED Week scheduled for September 7 - 11, 2004 to be held in Washington, D. C and others as scheduled.

Furthermore, Rural Development will keep up-to-date records and prepare an annual report, detailing all work done and the results accomplished under this MOU, and provide the report to MBDA within sixty (60) days of the end of the fiscal year.

V. Duties and Responsibilities of MBDA

MBDA will perform the following to promote Rural Development business programs:

- Utilize the Portal to highlight some of Rural Development business programs focused at increasing financing and cooperative advisory services for minority-owned rural firms.
- Through meetings, newsletters, and other communications with funded Centers and its network, MBDA will encourage participation in Rural Development business programs to assist Rural Development in meeting financing needs of the rural under-served firms.
- MBDA will conduct regional seminars in areas requested by Rural Development in writing if MBDA has the resources available to conduct the seminars. Rural Development is interested in these training seminars because it desires a more uniform and consistent credit analysis but possesses limited financial resources to provide such training to its personnel.
- Disseminate, through MBDA's funded Centers, financing and contract opportunities available through Rural Development business programs and USDA's programs which minority-owned firms can apply or obtain the information.
- Make a presentation at the Rural Development business programs National Policy Meeting which will be held in St. Louis, Missouri in August 2004 and other national and regional meetings as scheduled.

Furthermore, MBDA will keep up-to-date records and prepare an annual report, detailing all work done and the results accomplished under this MOU, and will provide the report to Rural Development within sixty (60) days of the end of the fiscal year.

VI. Mutual Agreement

Rural Development and MBDA mutually agree that:

1. Unpublished confidential data or information obtained during the course of this project shall not be made available to other persons except as authorized by or required of Rural Development or MBDA under the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act.
2. Both Rural Development and MBDA will be responsible for their own expenses incurred as a result of the activities identified above. However, any participation by either agency is subject to appropriations and no provision of this agreement is a mandatory commitment of Rural Development or MBDA funds.
3. This Memorandum of Understanding may be amended at any time by mutual agreement of the parties in writing, or terminated by either party upon 30 days notice in writing to the other party.

VII. Points of Contact

Rural Development and MBDA employees conducting activities under the terms of this MOU shall be as follows:

A. For MBDA - Personnel as required. Ronald L. Langston, National Director of MBDA, will serve at the point of contact for MBDA.

B. Rural Development - Personnel as required. John Rosso, Administrator, Business Programs, shall be the point of contact for Rural Development.

VIII. Effective Date

All conditions and provisions of this MOU shall become effective upon execution and shall continue in force until no later than October 1, 2007, at which time, or prior thereto, the parties may renew this MOU by further written agreement.

IX. Limitations

This document is a Memorandum of Understanding only. It is entered into only as a declaration of present intent. Nothing herein shall be construed as a legally binding commitment to any part of parties hereto either individually or collectively. This MOU does not create any rights either on the part of any party hereto or any third party. Any provision of this MOU that conflicts with federal law will be null and void.

X. Approvals

Gilbert Gonzalez
Acting Under Secretary, Rural Development
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Date

Ronald L. Langston
National Director, Minority Business Development
Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

Date

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