

## BusinessLINC

By NCCED

### Background

In 1998, Vice President Gore introduced BusinessLINC to enhance the economic vitality and competitive capacity of small businesses, particularly those in economically distressed urban and rural areas. The LINC acronym stands for "Learning, Information, Networking, Collaboration." The Small Business Administration (SBA) leads this initiative in conjunction with the Department of Treasury.

At the local level, BusinessLINC facilitates partnerships between large and smaller, less-experienced businesses. Smaller companies gain from guidance that larger companies have to offer, such as technical advice, management expertise, marketplace credibility, and sources of financing. Larger companies can leverage these relationships to penetrate local markets with untapped buying power, find new strategic market niches, and diversify supplier bases. In the long term, fostering partnerships between small and large companies also produces considerable benefits for distressed communities. Increased neighborhood activity can often result in increased revenue for the community, better quality of life, increased civic capacity, and sustainable leadership development.

BusinessLINC encourages the development of business-to-business networks through a multi-faceted strategy that entails:

- One-on-one technical assistance and consulting;
- Classroom group training;
- Peer groups and boards of advisors;
- Subcontracting and supplier development programs; and
- Sales channel development programs.

BusinessLINC also maintains an extensive online database of participating companies. The database houses information about large companies willing to serve as mentors to smaller companies; small business protégés; small business procurement or contracting opportunities; and intermediaries who facilitate and promote mentor-protégé relationships and business partnerships. Through this database and other web-based networking opportunities, BusinessLINC connects businesses and disseminates best practice models.

Currently, there are eight local BusinessLINC Coalitions located in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Mississippi, New York City, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. Each chapter is headed by a large company CEO, who works in conjunction with local partners. Additionally, SBA has signed a number of strategic Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that greatly enhance the BusinessLINC network. For example, SBA entered into an MOU with the Big Three automakers (Ford Motor, General Motors, and Chrysler) that increases the contract awards each company designates to minority and women-owned businesses. Under the MOU agreement, the automakers will also sponsor an executive education program for at least ten minority executives on an annual basis.

## Status

The BusinessLINC program received an appropriation of \$1.5 million in FY 2000. This year, BusinessLINC was allocated \$7 million as part of the New Markets and Community Renewal Initiative passed by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton on December 21, 2000. Although the complete details of BusinessLINC are not available yet from the Government Printing Office, advocates expect that it will require a one-for-one match. The match can be either in kind or cash, equal to the grant amount.

## What You Can Do

Encourage small businesses in your community to register as a protégé in BusinessLINC's on-line database, and urge large companies that you partner with to register as mentors.

Tell your Legislator how important BusinessLINC is for providing small businesses in distressed communities with support, and emphasize that increased business opportunities help build strong neighborhoods. Encourage full funding of BusinessLINC.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

#### **Web Resources**

<http://businesslinc.sba.gov/>

Visit the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization at each agency:

<http://www.usda.gov/osdbu> (U.S. Department of Agriculture)

<http://www.osec.doc.gov/osdbu> (U.S. Department of Commerce)

<http://www.hhs.gov/progorg/osdbu> (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

<http://www.hud.gov:80/cts/osdbabt.html> (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development)

<http://www.usdoj.gov/jmd/osdbu> (U.S. Department of Justice)

<http://osdbuweb.dot.gov> (U.S. Department of Transportation)

<http://www.ustreas.gov/sba/index.html> (U.S. Department of Treasury)

#### **BusinessLINC**

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Fax: (202) 785-4702

<http://business-linc.org/>

#### **U.S. Small Business Administration**

409 Third Street, NW

Washington, DC 20416

Ph: (202) 205-6118

<http://www.sba.gov>

#### **U.S. Department of Treasury**

1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20220

Ph: (202) 622-2000

Fax: (202) 622-6415

<http://www.ustreas.gov/>

#### **U.S. Department of Agriculture**

Rural Development, Business-Cooperative Services

1400 Independence Avenue, SW

Room 5050, South Building

Washington, DC 20250

Ph: (202) 720-1400

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/index.html>

#### **U.S. Department of Commerce**

Economic Development Administration

14th & Constitution Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20230

Ph: (202) 482-5081

<http://www.doc.gov/eda>