



# OSDBU UPDATE

March 2001



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## Notes From Scott

On Wednesday, February 14, 2001, VA dedicated OSDBU's Center for Veterans Enterprise (CVE). How fitting to dedicate an organization whose mission is to promote business opportunities for veterans and service-disabled veterans on "No Greater Love Day," the Nation's annual salute to hospitalized veterans.

A standing room only audience attended the dedication, held in VA Central Office's largest meeting room. The Honorable Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, led the ribbon cutting ceremony after remarks by Congressman Jack Quinn (NY-30th), a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, and the Committee's ranking minority member, Congressman Lane Evans (IL-17<sup>th</sup>). I want to thank the CVE staff for their dedication and hard work to make the Center a reality and the dedication ceremony such a success.

VA established the Center for Veterans Enterprise as part of its implementation of Public Law 106-50, The Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999

## National Acquisition Center

By Deborah VanDover

It is with great pleasure that OSDBU recognizes Mr. George Patterson, Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of VA's National Acquisition Center (NAC), and the fine contracting staff of the NAC's Federal Supply Service for their outstanding support of the small business community in Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) contract awards. We congratulate them for a job well done! During fiscal year 2000, there were a total of 1380 active FSS contractors. Of this total, 1079 were small businesses of all types of ownership, or 78% of the total active contractors. The total dollar amount spent with these small business contractors was nearly \$321 million.

NAC has done an exceptional job of providing VA contracting

OSDBU WEBSITE

[www.va.gov/osdbu](http://www.va.gov/osdbu)

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officers with small businesses under the FSS program; now it is up to those contracting officers to use the small businesses. NAC has provided the tools to further support the small business community; use these resources wisely.

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(August 17, 1999) . Some of the highlights of Public Law 106-50 include: Establishment in SBA the Office of Veterans Business Development, and designating a position of Associate Administrator for Veterans Business Development to administer the office. The National Veterans Business Development Corporation (Corporation) is established to expand the provision of, and improve access to, technical assistance regarding entrepreneurship for veterans and to work with and organize public and private resources and the business development staffs of each Federal department and agency to assist veterans and service-disabled veterans with the formation and expansion of small businesses. The law also includes veteran small businesses within Federal contracting and subcontracting goals for small business owners and within goals for the participation of small businesses in Federal procurement contracts. The FY 2001 procurement goals for service-disabled veteran businesses and veteran-owned business are three and seven percent, respectively.

The primary goal of the CVE is to foster economic freedom for every veteran entrepreneur and to provide support to veterans, including service-disabled veterans, who are considering business ownership as a career

option. The Center will educate citizens about the benefits of this program; locate the 5.5 million veteran-owned businesses; coordinate prime and subcontracting business opportunities with veterans and private sector buyers; exceed legislated program goals and encourage growth through intergovernmental and private sector initiatives.

Although the CVE was only dedicated February 14<sup>th</sup>, it has been in operation for several months, staffing and developing strategies to implement Public Law 106-50. As OSDDBU's Director, I will serve as the CVE's Director. Gail Wegner is OSDDBU's Deputy Director for Veterans Enterprise, Jim Dunning, our electronic outreach manager, serves as CVE's e-business specialist and Webmaster. Rounding out the CVE staff is Tyrone Lassiter, Intergovernmental Affairs Officer, Mark Taylor, Corporate Affairs Officer, and Chris Wilbon, Veterans Business Outreach Specialist. We have assembled a very talented and dedicated staff that will serve veterans well.

The CVE has established a presence on the Internet at the following URL address: <http://www.vetbiz.gov>. The site has been visited over 9,000 times since its establishment. Please visit the site to learn more about the CVE and Public Law 106-50. The CVE is located in Room 1208 of OSDDBU's suite on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor at TechWorld Plaza, and may be reached, toll-free, at 1-866-584-2344, or commercially at 202-565-8336. When you visit Washington, DC, please drop in and visit the CVE.

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## **PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA) AND THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)**

BY: Lynette Simmons

The Partnership Agreement (PA) between SBA and the VA allowing direct contracting with Small Disadvantaged Business under SBA's 8(a) Business Development Program became effective December 26, 2000. Some of the procedural changes covered by the PA include: Eliminating the requirement for an offering or acceptance letter for requirements processed under the simplified acquisition threshold. A new requirement to include in Section H of all 8(a) solicitations a VA provision entitled "Section 8(a) Direct Award", to notify the prospective contractor of SBA and VA responsibilities. The PA provides that VA shall determine which requirements are suitable for offering to the 8(a) program in accordance with FAR Subpart 19.8 and where appropriate,

identify in conjunction with the appropriate SBA servicing offices, 8(a) participants capable of performing the requirements.

Under the PA the contracting activities are responsible for issuing procurement instrument identification numbers; the SBA will not issue subcontract numbers. The PA also establishes expedited timeframes for SBA review of offering letters, issue acceptance or rejection letters and make eligibility determinations.

An important requirement of the PA is for contracting activities to provide a copy of any contract to the SBA servicing district office within 15 days of award and a copy of the contract signature page to the Office of Small and Disadvantaged business Utilization (OSDBU). SBA will issue a quarterly letter to VA's OSDBU with a copy to the Senior Procurement Executive identifying accepted requirements for which an SBA district office has not received award documents. Timely submission of contract award documents will be essential to continuing the PA, as SBA reserves the right to rescind or suspend the PA if copies are not submitted to SBA within 15 working days. The PA is expected to significantly enhance the ability of contracting activities to conduct 8(a) acquisitions in a timely manner to meet program needs. A copy of the agreement can be found at [www.va.gov/oa&mm/Info/IL01-3.htm](http://www.va.gov/oa&mm/Info/IL01-3.htm)



## **VA Among America's Top 50 Organizations Providing Multicultural Business Opportunities.**

By Wayne Simpson

VA recently received important recognition thanks to the efforts of VA's acquisition professionals in support of small business programs. In the first Internet election by America's leading women and minority owned businesses, VA was voted as one of the top 50 organizations providing multicultural business opportunities. Over 50,000 women and minority owned businesses had the opportunity to participate in the election. The winners were announced December 21, 2000, on Cable TV Network CNBC.

The election was produced and funded by one of the country's leading minority-owned Information Technology Professional Services firms under the name Div2000.com. Div2000.com is a business portal providing a link between Multicultural owned

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## REPORTING MODIFICATIONS



### Small Business Builds America

**Modifications are reported using the action date for the Modification, not the contract award date.**

By Lisa Russell

It is important that modifications that obligate funds be reported into FPDS. Modifications are reported using the action date for the Modification, not the contract award date. This means that a contract awarded in Fiscal Year 2000 with a FY 2000 action date will be counted toward your FY 2000 accomplishments. If a modification to that contract is issued in FY 2001 and reported with a correct action date of FY 2001, the dollar amount of that modification counts toward your FY 2001 accomplishments. Using the correct action date is extremely critical for your contracting activity's accomplishments and our agency's accomplishments.

The Federal Procurement Data Center does not use the report period field to retrieve data on agencies' accomplishments. They use the action dates that fall within that fiscal year. If an action date for a previous fiscal year is used when reporting a modification, the dollars are credited to that previous fiscal year. So, please ensure that your contract modifications are reported, and that they are reported with the action date in which the modification became effective.

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businesses, Fortune 1000 companies, Government agencies and universities.

Other top 50 organizations include IBM, Boeing, Microsoft, 3Com, Wal-Mart and Cisco Systems. VA was recognized for this distinction at an awards ceremony and Diversity Forum at Fairfield University in Fairfield, CT, on January 18, 2001.

### Minnesota conference

By Janice Severs

The Federal Executive Board of Minnesota's Small and Disadvantaged Business Opportunity Council (SADBOC) recently sponsored a Government Procurement Fair at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. Over 450 small business owners and representatives of public and private organizations attended the event. The procurement fair offered an outstanding array of educational workshops, including presentations on the HUBZone program, engaging Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, 8(a) Business Development orientation and subcontracting opportunities.

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Jan Severs, Network 13 Acquisition Manager, gave a presentation on the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act. VISN 13 contracting officers Carol Murphy, Colleen Mackereth and David Steeves provided counseling to small businesses about doing business with the VA in general and with the VA facilities located in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.

The SADBOC's mission to create public awareness of the needs of small and disadvantaged businesses was enhanced through the procurement fair.



## A Site is Born!

By Jim Dunning

Sometime on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 2001 the latest government-wide web site came into official existence. The official site of the Center for Veterans Enterprise switched from [vetbiz.va.gov](http://vetbiz.va.gov) to [VETBIZ.GOV](http://VETBIZ.GOV). VA has established the Center for Veterans Enterprise (CVE) as part of its implementation of Public Law 106-50, the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999.

The site supports Veteran-Owned Businesses, and in

particular, Service Connected Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses. Starting as an adjunct to the OSDBU web site, the scope of the efforts to support veteran-owned businesses quickly grew as memorandums of agreement were signed between VA, the Small Business Administration, the Department of Labor, the Association of Small Business Development Centers, and the Association of Government Marketing Assistance Specialists.

Use of the .gov site names is controlled by the General Services Administration (GSA) and requires the request be signed by the agency Chief Information Officer. With the assistance of Walt Houser of the VA CIO's office the requisite letters were signed and forwarded to GSA. Once the request was underway we had to secure web services to host the site. Once again our fellow VA services came to the rescue. With the help of the VHA CIO's office and, in particular Chuck Leahey and the Web Operations staff at the VHACIO Field Office in Silver Spring, we got the vital web server support. Since the code for the site already resided at Silver Spring, setup was minimized. After clearing up the usual coding snafus the site was up and running and providing much needed information on services and benefits available to veteran-owned businesses.

Please visit the site and familiarize yourself with the information and assistance available. And if you know any veterans interested in starting a business or enhancing an existing business, let them know the place to go is:

**VETBIZ.GOV**

## Senator Bond Congratulates Procurement Staff, at Ft. Dietrick

Recently two members of the VA procurement staff were congratulated by Senator Christopher S. Bond, Chairman of the Committee on Small Business. Ms. Mary Rust, Senior Contracting Officer and Mr. Russell Taylor, Team Leader of the Air Force Medical Logistics Office/Veterans Affairs Special Services located at Ft. Dietrick, Maryland were congratulated by Senator Bond who wrote a letter to the Secretary praising their work with one of Senator Bond's constituents.

The constituent, a small business, was in the process of trying to obtain a contract through the HUBZone program and Ms. Rust and Mr. Taylor were very helpful and supportive of his efforts. The Senator goes on to state that he does not take positions on whether a particular contract should be awarded to a specific vendor, but he wanted to praise the work that Ms. Rust and Mr. Taylor had done and thank them for the support of the HUBZone program.

The vendor contacted the Senator to express his appreciation for the positive and constructive working relationship. Senator Bond stated, "Such relationships help ensure that vendors remain interested in Federal contracting, ensuring competitive prices and high quality for the Federal taxpayer. It is just good business, and good public policy to treat potential vendors fairly and politely." We here in OSDBU echo Senator Bond's sentiments and wish to add our own

appreciation and congratulations to Ms. Rust and Mr. Taylor. We are grateful to the many procurement officials that take the time to show courtesy and give their valuable time to the small business community.

## Market Research A Search Engine for Search Engines?

By Jim Dunning

Frequently I need to find a tutorial on some aspect of web development or a particular software program. I recently discovered Lookoff (<http://www.lookoff.com>). Lookoff is an entire site devoted to helping you to navigate the Internet using advanced tools and techniques. This site is devoted to helping you select a search engine from thousands depending on the topic you are searching for.

I went to Lookoff and asked for a search engine specifically for tutorials. Ever heard of *findtutorials.com*? Neither had I, but it exists. I had it search for a tutorial in market research. It came up with one tutorial (<http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/e-business/marketing/tutorials/tutorial4.html>). There are several others that it didn't report: Federal Acquisition Institute (<http://www.faionline.com/fai/register/brochure/courses.htm>) US Navy (<http://www.acqref.navy.mil/marketresearch/>) Vivamus (<http://www.vivamus.com/chap5.html>) i-Mart; Department of Defense

and Federal Acquisition Institute (<http://www.imart.org/tutorial/tutorialindex.htm>) SBA Women's Online Business Center ([http://www.onlinewbc.org/docs/market/mk\\_research\\_trad.html](http://www.onlinewbc.org/docs/market/mk_research_trad.html)) But it did come up with one that I wasn't familiar with. Yahoo came up with four sites, none of which had market research tutorials. When I did the same search on Google.com, a more general search engine, I got 90 pages of possible sites, far more than I have the time to deal with.

On a more esoteric search I asked for sites offering tutorials in web design and cascading style sheets. I got twenty-two sites. Yahoo delivered 4,020 possible sites and Google produced 9,920 possible sites. Like most of you, the idea of searching through all of those sites was enough to make me throw up my hands and scream. While the Lookoff listing was much smaller, it contained only the tutorials that I was looking for and made the selection much less onerous.

It's not the most complete search site, but it is a valuable tool in locating the appropriate search engine for searching for specific information. As such, it's going to be one of the first places I go to look for information on the web.

## AMI Construction, GAO Decision B-286351

By Deborah Van Dover

A contracting agency's reliance on information in the Small Business Administration's (SBA) PRO-Net database to determine that a protester, which certified itself in its bid as an eligible HUBZone small business concern, was not small and thus was not eligible for a HUBZone evaluation preference was improper because such questions must be referred to the SBA under applicable regulations where the agency does not believe it can or should accept the bidder's self-certification.

In the matter of AMI Construction, the contracting officer was unwilling to accept the contractor's self-certification because the SIC Code which applied to this particular procurement was not listed on the contractor's profile under SBA's Pro-Net database. AMI protested that it is a certified HUBZone small business concern eligible under SIC code 1629 and that the agency improperly failed to accept AMI's certification and did not apply the HUBZone preference which would have made AMI the low bidder. SBA pointed out that the determination of whether a firm is small for purposes of a particular procurement is separate from the determination of whether the firm is a qualified HUBZone small business concern (although the latter does include a determination that the firm is small for purposes of its primary industry classification). See

13 C.F.R. § 126.203 (2000). The contracting officer appears to have treated the two determinations as one. There is no dispute, however, about whether AMI was a HUBZone small business concern, since the contracting officer was aware that AMI's name appeared on the SBA's list of qualified HUBZone small business concerns. Thus, the HUBZone issue is irrelevant to this case, which turns solely on the contracting officer's authority to reject a firm's self-certification as to its size status for purposes of a specific procurement. Here, the contracting officer was unwilling to accept AMI's self-certification in its bid because the SIC code that applied to this particular procurement did not appear on the SBA's PRO-Net listing for AMI. However well intentioned the contracting officer's action, it was an improper usurpation of SBA's authority.

SBA, not the procuring agency, has conclusive authority to determine size status matters for federal procurements. According to FAR § 19.301, an offeror may self-certify that it is a small business concern in connection with a specific solicitation if it meets the definition of a small business concern applicable to the solicitation and has not been determined by SBA to be other than a small business; the contracting officer must either accept the firm's self-certification or (if the self-certification is challenged or the contracting officer has reason to question the representation) refer the matter to SBA; the contracting officer does not have authority to reject the self-certification.

The complete text of this GAO decision can be found at [www.gpo.gov](http://www.gpo.gov)

[Note to Reader: This acquisition pre-dates the October 1, 2000, required use of the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) Codes, ergo, the references to SIC Codes.]

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Los Angeles, CA	NASA JPL Conference	3/1-2/2001
Manchester, NH	Mayor Baines Partner America Small Business Outreach	3/14/2001
Anaheim, CA	Economic Development In Indian Country	3/19-22/2001
Philadelphia, PA	Alliance Opportunities for Small Business	3/19/2001
Houston, TX	Government Procurement Connections	3/20/2001
Ft. Lauderdale, FL	AGMAS 2001 Conference	3/25-29/2001
Pittsburgh, PA	Minority Business Opportunity Fair	3/27/2001
Bellevue, WA	Alliance 2001	3/28-29/2001
Fargo, ND	2001 Women's Showcase	3/31/2001
Indianapolis, IN	Indiana Business opportunity Fair	4/10-11/2001
Chicago, IL	Chicago Business Opportunity Fair	4/11-12/2001
Tampa, FL	15 <sup>th</sup> Annual Small Business Trade Conference	4/1-3/2001
Richmond VA	Virginia Business opportunity Fair	4/23-25/2001
Upper Marlboro, MD	OSDBU Directors Interagency Council Conference	4/24/2001
Augusta, ME	Blaine House Conference on Small Business	4/25/2001
Kansas City, MO	Business Investment Expo	5/1-2/2001
Mobile, AL	Business Connections 2001	5/7-9/2001
Washington, DC	Small Business Week/Industry Day	5/7/2001
Milwaukee, WI	Partners for Profit	5/8-9/2001
Detroit, MI	Michigan Minority Procurement Conference	5/17-18/2001
Anchorage, AK	Alliance North 2001	5/17-18/2001
Morgan, WV	Annual West Virginia Summit "Teaming to Win"	5/30-6/1/2001
Oklahoma City, OK	23 <sup>rd</sup> Annual OMSDC Business Conference	6/6-7/2001