

Small Business Development Column

Q. What is the Minority Business Enterprise Center?

A. The Mobile Chamber is pleased to have been selected by the Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency to operate the Alabama Minority Business Enterprise Center (ALMBEC). It is one of only 31 MBECs in the country and the only one in the state of Alabama.

The Center provides business and technical assistance to help existing minority owned businesses in growing their business with the purpose of providing local economic growth through job creation, revenue growth and establishing long-term relationships. The focus is to provide services to minority firms in two categories. First, those with \$500,000 or more in annual revenues, considered "Strategic Growth Initiative" firms (SGI firms). Also eligible are minority firms with \$250,000 annual revenues, but experiencing "Rapid Growth Potential" (RGP firms). While the MBEC strategy focuses efforts on these firms, the ALMBEC offers service to all minority firms through referrals to qualified strategic partners.

Entrepreneurs eligible for assistance under the ALMBEC Program are SGI or RGP firms 51% owned by African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Spanish-speaking Americans, Aleuts, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, Asian Indians, Native Americans, Eskimos or Hasidic Jews.

In its first year, the MBEC is proud to have met or exceeded many of its goals. The MBEC staff assisted 84 clients in acquiring more than \$5,000,000 in contracting opportunities by consulting with purchasing agents and clients in a variety of areas, including market promotion /management, securing financing, facilitating joint ventures, and management training.

ALMBEC's project director Leon Grove and business consultant Pam Ramos provided Frank Seltzer, president of Superior Masonry, a Mobile-based firm, with general technical assistance and procurement leads that have better positioned his firm to win additional contracts. Additionally, at the recent Minority Enterprise Development week hosted by the ALMBEC Superior Masonry was presented with the Outstanding Minority Client Relationship Appreciation Award.

"The AL MBEC has been successful in promoting Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) and building MBE capacity by providing more than 1000 consulting hours to its clients during its first year of operations. I look forward to the next 12 months, when MBEC will create many more local success stories by matching capable MBEs with the growing opportunities in the area," said Darrell Randle, Vice President Small Business Development, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce.

For more information about the Alabama Minority Business Enterprise Center visit the website at www.mbecalabama.org or call 251-433-2250.