

Bottom Line – SBDC Program

June 08

Small business owners across the region are encouraged to take full advantage of the free training and construction management counseling currently being offered by the College of the Canyons Small Business Development Center.

The California Construction Contracting Program — a partnership between the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the California Community College's Economic and Workforce Development Program and the California Small Business Development Center (SBDC) program — provides free training and business counseling designed to enhance the ability of small business owners to bid for, and win, lucrative government and state highway construction contracts.

“Doing business with the government is really just selling to a customer. The same rules of business generally apply,” said Paul De La Cerda, College of the Canyons SBDC director. “But with our counseling and training services we can help small business owners minimize problems and clear up misconceptions about doing business with the government.”

With the recent passage of statewide infrastructure bonds the reconstruction of California's roads and highways is already underway. Between October 1, 2007 and September 30, 2008, Caltrans anticipates receiving in excess of \$3 billion of federal transportation funding and \$3.5 billion in state funding.

As such, small businesses offering hundreds of common services, from asphalt to porta-potties, from backhoes to fencing, and from catering to architectural and engineering services, are all eligible to receive the free SBDC training and counseling the program provides.

“Each year government contracts worth over \$1 trillion are issued to small businesses in the United States. However of the roughly 22 million small businesses in the country, only one percent of them participate in any type of government contract bidding,” De La Cerda said. “We want to help that number increase by educating local small business owners on how to better compete for government contracts.”

The California Construction Contracting Program's counseling and training sessions are led by expert SBDC training consultants, including current and former contractors and business owners in the transportation contracting and management fields, who possess an intimate understanding of the bidding and award processes of Caltrans and other local agencies, including school districts and municipalities.

Counseling is offered in both construction management and business management, with all small business owners who enroll in the program receiving complimentary personalized advice and counseling in a confidential one-on-one setting. Areas of instruction include construction contracting, business, wage and employment law, accounting and cash flow management, sales and marketing, management and planning and business connections.

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“A successful bid or proposal depends upon a thorough understanding of terms and conditions of the government contract and the process by which the government evaluates proposals,” De La Cerda said. “Our staff is experienced in helping local business owners understand contract terms and conditions, multiple award schedules, commercial products issues, subcontracting uses and teaming arrangements and required certifications and disclosures. SBDC is here to help make it as easy as possible for owners to learn how to grow their businesses and prosper.”

The Small Business Development Center, hosted by College of the Canyons, was launched in January 2006. Serving the Antelope Valley, San Fernando Valley, and Santa Clarita Valley, the SBDC helps prospective and existing small business owners in northern Los Angeles County, start, retain or expand their businesses by providing workshops, one-on-one consulting, and many other resources to the business community.

Last year the College of the Canyons SBDC was awarded the Top Overall Performance Award, out of the network of nine Small Business Development Centers serving businesses in the Santa Barbara, Ventura and Los Angeles Counties.

Info Box

Learn More

- For more information about the California Construction Contracting Program please visit www.buildcalifornia.org.
- To register for any of the local California Construction Contracting Program counseling or training services, please call (661) 294-9375.
- For more information about the Small Business Development Center hosted by College of the Canyons, visit www.canyonsecondev.org