ASBDC ACCREDITATION STANDARDS
2012 – 2015

1.0 LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

Objective: *Create an environment in which the lead center director and other program leaders routinely address organizational values, ethical behavior and performance expectations.*

1.1 Senior Leadership Authority

SBDC senior leaders must have authority to make key decisions for:
- **Guiding and sustaining the SBDC organization to align it with key stakeholders and support organizations,**
- **Setting strategic direction,**
- **Managing operations,**
- **Allocating resources,**
- **Managing the SBDC budget,**
- **Determining the appropriate organizational structure and reporting relationships,**
- **Determining the optimal location of centers,**
- **Designing personnel requirements and duties**
- **Negotiating and interacting with key stakeholders, and**
- **Setting and reviewing performance expectations, including performance expectations that are part of the SBA Cooperative Agreement as well as performance expectations of other key funding sources.**

1.2 Senior Leadership Responsibilities

The SBDC leadership system creates an environment in which the Lead Center Director and other program leaders routinely guide and sustain the SBDC organization, communicate with the workforce, encourage high performance, advance organizational values, and promote ethical behavior.

SBDC leaders must systematically:

- **Set direction,**
- **Address current and future opportunities,**
- **Set standards for organizational values and promote ethical behavior,**
- **Have processes in place that ensure sound fiscal and contractual management of the SBDC program,**
- **Communicate and deploy performance expectations, and**
- **Review performance to understand the health of the organization and to enable translation of performance findings and learning into priorities for improvement and innovation.**

SBDC senior leaders must ensure that the SBDC operates in compliance with:
- **Federal laws and regulations, and**
- **The Notice of Award and Program Announcement.**

SBDC senior leaders must support and participate in the common interests of the Association of Small Business Development Centers including political objectives, national initiatives and financial obligations.

2.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING

Objective: *Develop systematic, well defined and well understood decision making processes which focus on long-term sustainability and results in the development of mid to long term strategies and action plans, and aligns the organization in pursuit of its long-term strategies. The strategic planning process may vary based upon the needs, size, challenges and opportunities within the SBDC lead center.*

2.1 Strategy Development

2.1 (a) Strategy Development Process

Strategic planning must demonstrate a systematic (regular and continual) approach to collecting and analyzing relevant data and information to identify key success factors for SBDC sustainability and development of key strategic objectives.

2.1 (b) Strategic Objectives

The SBDC's strategic planning process must identify key strategic objectives, measures, timetables for accomplishment, and the most important goals for the strategic objectives.

2.2 Strategy Deployment

A systematic (regular and continual) and well understood process must be in place to:
- **Convert strategic objectives into actions,**
- **Modify actions if circumstances require a shift,**
- **Define innovations in products and services which are driven by client and stakeholder needs,**
- **Define key performance measures and indicators for tracking progress, and**
- **Define requirements in financial, technological and key human resource planning.**

3.0 CUSTOMER AND STAKEHOLDER FOCUS

Objective: *Identify and segment clients, markets and key stakeholders; determine needs, requirements, expectations and preferences for each; build relationships; and determine satisfaction.*

3.1 Knowledge of Client, Stakeholder, and Market Needs, Requirements, Preferences, and Expectations

SBDC should demonstrate it has a systematic process or processes to determine needs, requirements, expectations, and preferences of clients, stakeholders and markets to ensure the continuing relevance of SBDC products and services and the development of new SBDC business opportunities.

3.1 (a) Client Requirements, Needs, and Expectations (Preferences)

SBDCs should have a regular and continual process in place to gather and analyze relevant information regarding key needs and requirements, as well as product and service expectations (preferences) of client segments and key clients.

3.1 (b) Stakeholder Needs, Requirements and Expectations (Preferences)

SBDCs should have a regular and continual process in place to gather and analyze relevant information regarding key needs, requirements, and expectations (preferences) of key stakeholders and resource partners.

3.1 (c) Market Needs and Expectations (Preferences)

SBDCs should have a regular and continual process in place to gather and analyze relevant information regarding key needs and expectations (pref-

erences) of the broader small business market in order to identify potential new markets, market segments, or other new business opportunities.

3.2   Management of Client and Key Stakeholder Relationships and Satisfaction

3.2 (a) Stakeholder Relationships

SBDCs must have a systematic (regular and continual) process for:
- Building relationships with existing stakeholders and acquiring new stakeholders,
- Enhancing the SBDC's value to key stakeholders,
- Listening to and obtaining feedback from key stakeholders, and
- Assessing, analyzing, and responding to stakeholder satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction. Methodology should capture actionable information for use in meeting or exceeding stakeholders' expectations. Processes should be in place to integrate feedback as part of a continuous improvement system.

3.2 (b) Client Relationships

SBDCs must have a systematic (regular and continual) process for:
- Building relationships with existing clients and acquiring new clients,
- Enhancing the SBDC's value to clients,
- Listening to and obtaining feedback from clients, and
- Assessing, analyzing, and responding to client satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction. Methodology should capture actionable information for use in meeting or exceeding clients' expectations. Processes should be in place to integrate feedback as part of a continuous improvement system.

3.3   Marketing and Promotional Programs

The requirements for designing, managing, and improving the marketing and promotional programs must include:
- A separate and identifiable logo or brand used consistently throughout the network including the SBDC or SBTDC name.
- A clear integration of strategy and image for the SBDC that conveys the SBDC image and identity as a cohesive SBDC network.
- Use of the brand or logo to convey the identity of a cohesive SBDC network on all information, materials, and signage.
- Acknowledgement of being an accredited member of the ASBDC where appropriate, and preferably having the approved ASBDC logo on the website of the lead center. (Note: If an SBDC is not accredited, the standard ASBDC logo is to be used instead.)

4.0   MEASUREMENT, ANALYSIS, AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Objective: *Create a performance management system for driving and managing daily operations and for tracking overall organizational performance. This system includes measurement selection, data collection, analysis, and alignment with key strategic objectives.*

4.1   Development and Implementation of a Performance System

SBDCs must have processes which identify how the organization selects measures, gathers and analyzes data, aligns, reviews, and utilizes its performance data and information at all levels of the SBDC program to enable learning and continuous improvement.

4.2   Security and Confidentiality of Data

SBDCs must have a system in place to ensure security and confidentiality of electronic and hard copy data.

4.3   Validation and Verification of Key Performance Results

SBDCs must have systems in place to validate and/or verify the accuracy of key performance measures and results.

4.4   Measurement of Economic Impact

Each SBDC program must participate in the impact studies of the ASBDC and SBA, and should develop a strategy which works towards a statistically significant number of responses.

5.0   WORKFORCE FOCUS

Objective: *Design work systems that encourage workforce learning and motivation and enable the workforce to develop and utilize their full potential in alignment with the SBDC's overall objectives and action plans. The SBDC's efforts must build and maintain a work environment and workforce support climate conducive to innovation, performance excellence, and to personal and organizational growth. Create and manage human resource systems to achieve high performance. Establish key workforce practices and a support climate that enables personal growth, organizational growth and performance excellence.*

5.1   Work Systems

The SBDC must have work systems, an organizational structure and staffing patterns based on analysis of key needs and strategies of the SBDC. This structure must align with the SBDC's strategic objectives and be designed to enable the workforce to achieve desired results and effectiveness while providing an opportunity to develop its full potential and achieve high performance.

5.2 Key Positions

Objective: *Key positions demonstrate appropriate business or administrative experience, knowledge and abilities to direct, coordinate and manage a multifaceted and multi-location organization. Key positions must have ability and skills to coordinate and manage a human resource system, establish and maintain collaborative relationships and understand business practices and management methods. Key positions and responsibilities, capacity, and salaries must be consistent with 13 CFR 130.460(f) (1).*

Lead Center Director and Associate/Assistant Director

The lead center director and associate/assistant director(s) should have at a minimum a master's degree in business or other directly related field, or a bachelor's degree with sufficient and progressively responsible experience, or have appropriate business or administrative experience that demonstrates the knowledge and abilities required to:

- Direct, coordinate and manage a multi-faceted, multi-location organization;

- Direct, coordinate and manage human and administrative resources;

- Understand the full range of business practices and business management methods; and

- Demonstrate skills in establishing and maintaining effective support and working relationships with a variety of public and private stakeholder partners that are needed for alignment with strategic objectives.

The salary of the SBDC lead center director and associate/assistant director(s) should at a minimum be equivalent to the annualized average salary of a full professor or associate professor, respectively, in the institution hosting the SBDC or parallel positions in the agency/organization hosting the SBDC. When the university host is not affiliated with a college, the salaries of the director and associate/assistant director(s) should be comparable to the college of business, college of engineering or equivalent.

The SBDC Network should have a plan or strategy focused on developing leadership skills and succession for key positions throughout the network.

5.3 Workforce Learning and Growth

Objectives: *Provide a method for determining the professional development needs of the workforce that supports the achievement of the SBDC's strategic objectives and contributes to the organization's performance. Provide on-going professional development and training for the workforce that builds its knowledge, skills and capabilities; contributes to achievement of action plans, organizational effectiveness, and career progression; supports key organizational needs related to the orientation of new members of the workforce, ethical business practices, management, and leadership; and addresses key needs associated with organizational performance and improvement and the changing business and technology environment. Provide an assessment and evaluation process that seeks input and feedback from the entire workforce regarding training needs and evaluation of professional development offerings.*

Workforce education and training must align with and support the achievement of the SBDC's strategic objectives, including the enhancement of workforce knowledge, skills, and leadership capabilities that contribute to organizational effectiveness and performance improvement.

The SBDC must have a systematic professional development program tied to its strategic objectives and provide evidence of its implementation throughout the network. The program must include:
- **Identification of network core competencies for all staff necessary to achieve desired results including specialties such as international trade, technology, and procurement;**
- **A method of determining the professional development needs of the workforce;**
- **An on-going workforce education and professional development strategy that meets or demonstrates progress toward achieving identified competencies for both network and individual;**
- **A structured training/orientation program for new members of the workforce; and**
- **An assessment system, including opportunities for feedback, to determine effectiveness of the professional development offerings and make changes when warranted.**

5.4 Workforce Environment and Motivation

Objectives: *Provide facilities that offer a professional environment for confidential client counseling. Assess and develop ways to improve workplace health, safety, security and ergonomics. Create workplace preparedness for disasters or emergencies. Determine specific factors that affect the workforces' well-being, satisfaction and motivation by developing formal or informal assessment methods to determine workforce satisfaction, well-being, and needs.*

Maintain a work environment and a workforce support climate that contributes to the well-being, satisfaction, and motivation of all personnel and:

- **Ensures and improves workplace health, safety, security, and ergonomics,**
- **Ensures workplace preparedness for disaster or emergencies,**
- **Provides staff an opportunity to periodically give feedback to determine the key factors that affect workforce well-being, satisfaction and motivation,**
- **Supports the workforce via benefits and policies including items such as compensation, career progression and related practices that enables the well being of the workforce. and**
- **Provides facilities that are professional in appearance, adequate for the delivery of services and allows for confidentiality for counseling.**

6.0 PROGRAM DELIVERY AND MANAGEMENT

Objective: *To design key service delivery processes that maximize client value and satisfaction and drive organizational success and sustainability.*

6.1 Key SBDC Services

Key services must be consistent with the national SBDC mission and align with the SBDC lead center strategy and cooperative agreement. Regular and continual processes for the design, delivery and management of key services must be in place.

For each key service, systematic processes must be in place to:

- Ensure efficient & effective delivery
- Identify client expectations & preferences
- Link to the strategic plan
- Measure effectiveness
- Assess staff performance
- Obtain client feedback & measure client satisfaction:
- Gather & analyze performance data
- Use data for continuous improvement
- Improve performance & increase value to clients
- Maintain client confidentiality & avoid conflicts of interest

6.2   Accreditation of Technology Programs

If the SBDC is applying or re-applying for accreditation of a technology program, it must develop its technology program to meet the Guidelines for SBDCs seeking or renewing Technology Accreditation and/or Designation as a Small Business and Technology Development Center (see Appendix A of this document).

7.0   RESULTS

Objective: *To develop a routine and continual process to examine trends of SBDC's organizational performance over time (3-5 years) including stakeholder and customer focused outcomes, process effectiveness outcomes, financial and market outcomes, workforce focused outcomes and leadership outcomes.*

For the SBDC to improve quality and performance, the SBDC must utilize a system to document its work performance and outcomes in order to drive continuous quality improvement. This should include an ability to report on the performance measurement elements set forth in Standards 1 through 6. It must also include an ability to report on common data and results. ("Common data" refers here to data collected and utilized by more than one and often all SBDCs.)

Each of the standards below should be evidenced by tables, charts, graphs or other data with narrative analysis describing how the SBDC uses the data to improve performance and the results of its efforts.

7.1   SBDC Service Results and Outcomes

- Define key performance metrics (as identified in Standard 4.1) including those mandated from funding sources.
- Provide trend data for a minimum of three years in either graphic forms or charts depicting the SBDC's current level and trends in key measures or indicators of service performance for the overall organization.
- Describe how this trend data is regularly used to manage performance and explain positive or negative trends. Provide examples of how the analysis of these trends drives improvement or has led to organizational changes that resulted in improved performance.

7.2 Customer-Focused Results and Outcomes

- Based on the strategy for segmenting your client market as described in Standard 3.1(a), provide trend data for a minimum of three years in either graphic forms or charts depicting the SBDC's current level and trends in key measures or indicators of service performance for product offerings, client groups or market segments as appropriate.
- Describe how this trend data is regularly used to manage performance and explain positive or negative trends. Provide examples of how the analysis of these trends drives improvement or has led to organizational changes that resulted in improved performance.

7.3 Market Results and Outcomes

- Describe peer or aspirant organizations (such as similarly funded or structured SBDCs or other local organizations). Define comparable metrics and data collection sources.
- Benchmark trend data for a minimum of three years in either graphic forms or charts depicting the SBDC's current level and trends in key measures or indicators of service performance to comparable SBDCs or national averages.
- Describe how this trend data is regularly used to manage performance and explain positive or negative trends. Provide examples of how the analysis of these trends drives improvement or has led to organizational changes that resulted in improved performance.

7.4 Human Resource Results and Outcomes

- Describe your key performance measures or outcomes for employee learning, workforce environment and general staff satisfaction (as identified in Standards 5.3 and 5.4).

- Provide trend data for a minimum of three years in either graphic forms or charts depicting the SBDC's current level and trends in key measures or indicators of human resource performance.
- Describe how this trend data is regularly used to manage performance and explain positive or negative trends. Provide examples of how the analysis of these trends drives improvement or has led to organizational changes that resulted in improved performance.

7.5   Organizational Effectiveness Results and Outcomes

- Describe key performance measures or outcomes for measuring indicating the return on investment of the SBDC either from the annual impact study or other sources and include any other metrics (i.e., cost per job created or amount of new sales for every dollar invested in the SBDC) which would help evaluate organizational effectiveness.
- Provide trend data for a minimum of three years in either graphic forms or charts depicting the SBDC's current level and trends in key measures or indicators of organizational effectiveness.
- Describe how this trend data is regularly used to manage performance and explain positive or negative trends. Provide examples of how the analysis of these trends drives improvement or has led to organizational changes that resulted in improved performance.

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