

ACCREDITATION CONTRACT UPDATE 2013

The Office of Small Business Development Centers (OSBDC) and the Association of Small Business Development Centers entered into a new contract in 2012 to fund annual accreditation reviews and activities of the Accreditation Committee. The key changes to the contract were discussed at the spring meeting, and we wanted to reemphasize those changes in this newsletter.

The Committee's responsibilities include maintaining and updating the Accreditation Standards and Self Study, selecting and training the committee and training the ASBDC membership, conducting the reviews, and recommending committee action on both reviews and the standards to the Associate Administrator for OSBDC, who is the accrediting authority.

The Committee is authorized to conduct thirteen reviews each year. Over time, this will effectively change the review cycle to five years, and Accreditation Certificates will reflect a five year expiration date. The five year cycle will be phased in starting in 2012 and completed in 2015. By 2016, all programs will be on a five year cycle.

Review teams will generally be staffed with two members, although larger states may have as many as six members. That will change the logistics of some reviews by consolidating interviews and meetings with personnel from several centers into one central location. Each review team will be issued SBA travel orders and be charged with a limited travel budget.

One outcome of reviews has changed. Prior to this contract, there were three possible outcomes for an initial review: Accreditation, Accreditation with Condition(s), and Deferral. Under the new contract, the Deferral category has been replaced with Suspended Accreditation with Conditions. Any state or regional review which results in this new category will have eighteen months to satisfy all conditions. The fourth category, Denial of Accreditation, will only be utilized when a program fails to meet conditions within the prescribed time period.

Lastly, the Accreditation Committee is required to provide OSBDC with a draft progress report within 30 days of completing the review with understanding that the outcomes and results of the report may change.

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