



# **Standard Operating Policies & Procedures**

**Updated: February 2024**

Insert TOC prior to Preface

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## ***Preface***

The Florida Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network Standard Operating Policies (SOP) is a compilation of the key policies, practices, and procedures that guide consistency of day-to-day operations across the organization and intended to complement, not replace, the authorizing laws, regulations, and legislation that govern the programs operated and managed by the organization. Additional information concerning individual program requirements can be found in applicable program regulation.

The Florida SBDC Network SOP is updated annually. Interim changes may be communicated throughout the year in meetings, newsletters or in writing with the appropriate partner institutions. Suggestions for further additions, revisions or clarifications are welcome and should be forwarded to the Florida SBDC Network State Office.

## **How to Use**

The SOP is organized by the six pillars of the Network's Strategic Plan. In addition to making significant updates to the document, efforts have been made to streamline the information into a format that is more user friendly. At the beginning of each section, readers will find the following:

- Applicable strategic plan pillar,
- Policy Title,
- Policy Description,
- Responsible State Office department,
- Revision Date,
- Policy purpose, and
- Who the policy governs and/or needs to know the policy

While all employees are encouraged to review the entire SOP, as time allows, we have taken steps to clearly identify which sections apply to each relevant position type within the network. This information can be found in the Table of Contents as well as in the introduction of each section.

## ***Organizational Overview***

### **Who We Are**

As the largest network of small business consultants in Florida, the Florida SBDC provides access to no-cost consulting, affordable and high-quality resources, innovative tools, and the knowledge of experienced small business experts.

We are the most expansive and diverse network of over 200 business consultants, many of whom have built, grown, and sustained their own businesses. For nearly 50 years, we have partnered with business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs to accelerate their business journeys.

The Florida SBDC Network is committed to a culture based on the values of responsible stewardship and practices of continuous improvement and performance excellence.

For additional information, visit the Florida SBDC's strategic plan, [Vision 2025](#).

<b>Purpose</b>	We exist to amplify and champion the collective small voice of small businesses and ensure that every small business in the state of Florida has access to the assistance, tools and resources they need to start, grow and thrive
<b>Vision</b>	To be recognized by local and state stakeholders as the preeminent, go-to program and resource for small business consulting, research, knowledge, and data that supports the diverse Florida small business landscape.
<b>Mission</b>	As Florida’s trusted principal provider of business assistance, we help small businesses launch, grow, and thrive through expertise, resources and advocacy.
<b>Core Values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inclusivity</li> <li>● Collaboration</li> <li>● Innovation</li> <li>● Dedication to People</li> <li>● Mission-Driven</li> <li>● Relationship-Building</li> </ul>
<b>Our Commitments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Quality of service</li> <li>● Delivery of consulting services</li> <li>● Experience and depth of knowledge of consultants</li> <li>● Ability to create relationships with key audiences</li> <li>● Customer service experience delivery</li> <li>● Breadth and scope of services</li> <li>● Knowledge to help small businesses grow and succeed</li> <li>● Access to resources and information</li> </ul>

**Overview**

Since 1976, the **University of West Florida (UWF)** has served as the state office for the Florida SBDC Network. The APEX program was added in 1986.

The Florida SBDC Network is designated in [Florida Statute §288.001](#) as, “the principal business assistance organization for small businesses in the state.”

In cooperation with the **Florida State University System (SUS)**, and other state agencies and statewide business and economic development organizations, the Florida SBDC Network ensures that its investments and efforts align with the statewide goals of the:

- [2025 State University System of Florida Strategic Plan](#),
- [The Florida Chamber of Commerce Florida 2030 Blueprint](#), and
- statewide strategic economic development plan as provided under [Florida Statute §20.60](#).

Due to organization's multi-institutional focus and structure, the State University System Board of Governors for Florida has designated the Florida SBDC Network as a State of Florida Center – an entity with a statewide mission established to coordinate interinstitutional service across the State University System. [[BOG Regulation 10.015](#)]

## *Programs*

### **Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Program**

Congress established the **Small Business Development Center (SBDC)** program in 1980 as part of Chapter 21 of the [Small Business Act](#), under the general oversight of the **U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Office of Entrepreneurial Development (OED), Office of Small Business Development Centers (OSBDC)**. The national SBDC program is the U.S. SBA's largest entrepreneurial development cost-sharing program. The Florida SBDC is accredited through the national SBDC program – America's SBDCs, and is one of 62 SBDC networks, across the country.



U.S. Small Business  
Administration

### **Florida APEX Accelerator**

The Florida APEX Accelerator helps Florida-based businesses identify, compete for, and win government contracts.

Established by Congress in 1986, APEX Accelerators expand the number of businesses capable of participating in the broad spectrum of opportunities available to support America's industrial base. The APEX Accelerators program focuses on building strong, sustainable, and resilient U.S. supply chains by assisting a wide range of businesses that pursue and perform under contracts with the Department of Defense (DoD), other federal agencies, state and local governments and with government prime contractors. [See the Florida APEX Accelerator section for policies specific to the APEX program.](#)



## *Structure*

In Florida, the University of West Florida (UWF) is the federal and state designated **Recipient Organization** for the funded programs administered and operated by the Florida SBDC Network. [Only existing Recipient Organizations are eligible for continuation funding for the SBDC and APEX programs.](#) The Recipient Organization has the sole responsibility for establishing and supporting an independent entity, i.e. Florida SBDC Network State Office within the institution and designating the State Director to lead the organization.

The Florida SBDC State Office Network State Office is housed within the Office of the President at UWF located in Pensacola, Florida. The Network State Office serves as the managerial and administrative office (aka Lead Center) of the organization, and the State Director of the Florida SBDC Network serves as the senior executive leader of the organization. The State Director of the Florida SBDC Network is responsible for establishing an organizational structure that is collaborative and ensures direct client services are effective, efficient, and readily accessible to small businesses throughout Florida.

More information about the organization's structure, leadership system, key positions, and specific responsibilities can be found in the **PEOPLE** section of this manual.

## **Governance/Order of Precedence**

The Florida SBDC Network is governed and subject to the following requirements and representations, whether stated explicitly or incorporated by reference:

- I. Statutes, regulations, and policy documents:***
  - a. [15 USC 648 – SBDC Program Authorization \(aka Small Business Act\)](#);
  - b. [13 CFR Part 130](#);
  - c. [2 CFR Part 200](#) – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards;
  - d. [2 CFR Part 215](#) - Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education;
  - e. OMB Circular - A-133 - Audits of States, Local Governments, and other Non-Profit Orgs;
  - f. [Florida Statute §288.001](#), and
  - g. Any other relevant, subsequently enacted laws.
- II. Terms and Conditions of Prime Award:***
  - a. [SBDC Program Terms and Conditions](#) (The most recent SBA Cooperative Agreement)
  - b. APEX Accelerator General Terms and Conditions and APEX Accelerator Specific Terms and Conditions
- III. Federal Funding Solicitations:***
  - a. [SBA SBDC Program FFO](#), (Program Announcement No. OSBDC-2017-02; and
- IV. Any subsequently issued SBA or DOD policy guidance;***
- V. Florida SBDC Subcontract Agreement***
- VI. Any subsequently issued Florida SBDC Network policy guidance***
- VII. Florida SBDC Network Standard Operating Policies and Procedures Manual.***

In the event of a conflict between the terms of this manual and governing authority, the order of Precedence listed above will determine which prevails.

## **Contractual Partnership Model**

The Florida SBDC Network is a shared partnership between its various vested partners. Financial partnering is specifically included as a characteristic of the Florida SBDC's partnership model.

The term "partnership" does not constitute the creation of a legal entity, but rather the creation of a partnership characterized by mutual cooperation and accountability for the achievement of common goals and performance expectations.

A formal, contractual partnership does exist between the University of West Florida, state office for the Florida SBDC Network, and:

- U.S. SBA and DoD formalized by the execution of **Cooperative Agreements**, commonly referred to as “Notice of Awards” or “NOAs” (hereinafter Prime Awards).
- Regional SBDCs are contractual partnerships with the State Office and applied for through an Application for Continued Funding (ACF) process. Successful regional applicant partners will be formalized through the execution of a subcontract.

These annual agreements and subcontracts outline shared accountability, investment, management and performance expectations.

Specific funding expectations are described in the **PERFORMANCE** section of this manual.

### **Higher-Education Association**

When Congress created the national SBDC program they intended that SBDC services be delivered *primarily* through institutions of higher education. Therefore, when and where possible and appropriate, Florida SBDC should have an association or affiliation with the state university and state college in its respective market as host partners, satellite centers, or contributing investors and resource partners.

### **National Associations**

The Florida SBDC Network is a member of America’s SBDC. America’s SBDC is a nonprofit Association that represents America’s nationwide network of Small Business Development Centers. The network is accredited through the ASBDC every five years.

The Florida APEX Accelerator is a member of the National APEX Accelerators Alliance. The APEX Accelerators program focuses on building a strong, sustainable, and resilient U.S. supply chains by assisting a wide range of businesses that pursue and perform under contracts with the DoD, other federal agencies, state and local governments and with government prime contractors

### **Client Discrimination**

Florida SBDCs make its services available to all individuals and businesses on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, gender, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation or industry. The network continually monitors its service delivery to ensure service delivery is equitable to each federally designated population.

Accommodations are made for individuals with disabilities.

## **Strategic Planning Pillar: People - Invest in opportunities that enhance capacity and capability, and recognize success**

### **Policy Title: Florida SBDC Network Host Partner Institutions and Centers**

**Responsible Department:** Florida SBDC Network State Director

**Revision date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of the host institution and regional Florida SBDC service centers

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC Network State Office leadership; Regional leadership

#### **Policy Statement:**

The Florida SBDC Network State Office is responsible for establishing a service delivery structure that covers the state of Florida. UWF has designated authority for the management and operation of the SBDC and APEX to the Florida SBDC Network State Office.

As the designated recipient, UWF is responsible for establishing and maintaining a **Network State Office**, commonly referred to as Lead Center. Federal and State law define that the State Office is responsible for establishing and leading the Florida SBDC Network, including, but not limited to, managing overall program development, service coordination, financial management, reporting, promotion and public relations, evaluation, assessment and internal quality control over statewide network services.

Federal statute requires that the SBDC network must be housed within an institution of higher education, have its own full-time leader and staff, must have a separate budget and identity, and, if part of a larger unit, must be a clearly distinguishable sub-unit. Staffing must include a full-time State Director who will lead and administer the operations of the network and must have full authority to make expenditures under its (SBDC) budget as well as to manage the program activities. Other statutory requirements for the SBDC are outlined in **15 USC § 648(c)(2) and 13 C.F.R. §130**.

#### ***Host Partner Institutions***

The Florida SBDC Network is a contractual partnership between the State Office and nine (9) host partner institutions.



CENTER	HOST PARTNER	EST
State Office	University of West Florida	1976
Florida SBDC at UWF		
Florida SBDC at FAMU	Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	1980
Florida SBDC at FAU	Florida Atlantic University	2018
Florida SBDC at FGCU	Florida Gulf Coast University	1997
Florida SBDC at FIU	Florida International University	2014
Florida SBDC at IRSC	Indian River State College	2009
Florida SBDC at UNF	University of North Florida	1980
Florida SBDC at UCF	University of Central Florida	1980
Florida SBDC at USF	University of South Florida	1979

The Florida SBDC Network State Director deploys financial investments to ensure an ongoing effective organizational structure that provides and facilitates service delivery throughout Florida while providing necessary leadership and support services to achieve identified strategic objectives and exceeding performance expectations of funding partners. The guidelines used to allocate financial resources by the State Director are outlined in the **PERFORMANCE** section of this manual.

### **Service Centers**

Host partners are solicited by the Florida SBDC Network State Office each year to coincide with the project period of its Cooperative Agreements. The State Office contracts with regional centers at host partner institutions to deliver services in their respective service areas inclusive of the terms of the Network's Cooperative Agreements, statutory obligations and strategic plan. Each contract outlines performance expectations that the regional center must accomplish.

## **Policy Title:** Organizational Structure of the Florida SBDC Network

**Responsible Department:** Florida SBDC Network State Office, State Director

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines roles and responsibilities of the Florida SBDC Network leadership and personnel.

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** All Personnel - Florida SBDC Network

### **Policy Statement:**

The Florida SBDC Network has an organizational structure and staffing pattern based on analysis and alignment with key needs to achieve desired results while providing an opportunity to develop its full potential and achieve high performance.

### ***Leadership Structure***

The culture of the Florida SBDC Network encourages anyone, at any level regardless of position or title, to be a leader in the organization. Consequently, we deploy a collaborative, decentralized leadership system that focuses on positioning the organization as the thought leader and principal provider for small business development services.

The following describes the Florida SBDC's leadership system and structure.

### **State Director**

The Florida SBDC Network is headquartered at the University of West Florida. The State Director of the Network reports to the President of the University of West Florida.

As required by federal or state statute, regulations or partnership, the State Director also has formal reporting responsibilities, including but not limited to:

- Members of Congress
- Members of the Florida Legislature
- Florida Governor
- State University Board of Governors
- Federal Funding Agencies
- The Florida Department of Commerce (FloridaCommerce)
- Host Partner Organizations

The State Director of the Florida SBDC Network is the organization's full-time senior executive leader, and serves as the Principal Investigator on the SBDC and APEX grants. The State Director has primary accountability, responsibility and statutory authority for providing leadership, resource management, coordination and administrative direction, including but not limited to:

- defining the organization's vision and strategy;
- allocating financial and human resources;

- determining an appropriate organization structure and governance system;
- regularly interacting with the Dean/Department Head of each regional centers for continuity of network communications and service and performance updates;
- defining performance expectations and service deliverables, and
- managing key federal and state stakeholder relations, including congressional and legislative affairs and federal and state agency relationships.

The State Director has sole responsibility for defining the membership and purpose of the **Associate State Directors, Leadership Team, and Extended Leadership Team.**

*The State Director is the primary public face of the organization.*

### **Associate State Directors**

The Florida SBDC Network State Office is composed of four (4) Associate State Directors with primary responsibility and management of key functional areas. These senior leaders include:

- Director of Finance
- Director of Strategic Marketing and Communications
- Director of Strategic Programs
- Director of Strategic Partnerships

*The above senior leaders report directly to the State Director*

*The purpose of the Associate State Directors is to:*

- provide leadership and clear direction of what constitutes effectiveness, performance and success;
- ensure organizational assets are effectively invested to implement and achieve organizational strategy and success;
- ensure the organization is effective and successful by taking on responsibility for the implementation of an appropriate strategy that the organization can adapt to,
- Coordinates the regions in their respective areas of competencies to provide a statewide approach to maximize efficiencies and the use of taxpayer funding.
- effectively managing the demands of stakeholders,
- giving clear definitions of what constitutes effectiveness and success,
- ensuring the implementation of the strategy and the targeting of resources towards success
- reviewing if their actions are relevant to the organization's overall goals.

*Primary responsibilities of the Associate State Directors include but are not limited to:*

- Branding, marketing
- Budget oversight and fiscal leadership
- Data management, quality and reporting
- Digital and print media
- Event planning and scheduling
- Financial and programmatic audit coordination and oversight
- Financial and performance management and reporting
- Internal and external communications
- Intra-network communications
- CRM and network-wide tools development and management
- Prime contract management and oversight
- Proposal preparation and submission

- Relationship management
- Report preparation and submission
- Service center financial and performance management evaluation
- Sponsorship development
- Strategic and operational planning and implementation
- Subcontract preparation and oversight

## **Regional Directors**

Network management is defined through a contractual relationship between the State Office (UWF) and the selected host partner organizations. Through this contractual relationship the goal is to create a collaborative, efficient, effective, and an innovative network.

SBDC host partners designate an authorized representative, i.e. Regional Director to provide management and oversight. In accordance with the subcontract agreement, the State Office Leadership must have a role in the selection of the Regional Director. Regional Directors are part of the statewide Leadership Team.

Within the policies and regulations that govern the Florida SBDC Network, Regional Directors are delegated statutory authority and control of the center's budget for regional center management. Accountability resides with each Regional Director to effectively and efficiently allocate program resources to best deliver services within their service area consistent with the requirement of delivering services as close as possible to the small business community and achieving contractual performance requirements.

Center Regional Directors report directly to their supervisor within their respective host partner organization (employer), typically a Dean or Vice President. It is expected that the state office leadership has sufficient regional managerial oversight in defining program direction, strategy, and performance, as well as a collaborative culture with the Regional Director's supervisor in order to contribute input into his/her annual performance evaluation.

### ***The Leadership Team of the Florida SBDC Network includes:***

- The State Director and all Associate State Directors, and
- Regional Directors, as designated by the State Director

The primary purpose of the Leadership Team is to deploy, educate staff, and execute strategic vision; solve shared problems and ensure aligned action and collective responsibility for the organization's performance.

### ***Strategic Network Committees and Initiatives***

The State Director has the discretion to include other Network personnel such as sub-center directors, regional assistant directors, or other members of the State and Regional Office teams in certain decision making discussions. In addition, it is expected that each region will appoint a representative to participate in strategically identified committees and initiatives. In the event, a representative is not voluntarily named by the Regional Director, the State Office leadership reserves the right to work with the host institution leadership to fill the required position as necessary.

## **Consultants and Specialists**

SBDCs are encouraged to utilize a workforce system that meets the dynamics of our structure while leveraging the talents of host partner organizations and meeting customer needs.

Florida SBDC business consultants and specialists provide access to the expertise and experience emerging and established businesses need to achieve business growth.

A Florida SBDC Consultant or Specialists can be defined as an employee, private sector consultant, faculty member, professional volunteer or select qualified student who has been engaged to provide Consulting Services.

**ALL** Florida SBDC personnel are expected to complete and follow the Florida SBDC Conflict of Interest, Ethics and Acceptable Use of AI Policy, complete the New Hire orientation, and follow network branding standards regardless of their classification. See the **PERCEPTION** section for more information.

For operating and planning purposes, the following are the type of consultant classifications utilized by the Florida SBDC Network.

***Employee Consultant —***

An individual that receives a salary or wage from the host partner institution; has, in whole, been made part of the SBDC budget, and whom the Regional Director has direct control.

***Private Sector Consultant —***

Typically engaged on a per hour basis to provide SBDC consulting to small business concerns, a private sector consultant is an individual who is self-employed or an employee of an entity other than the host institution.

Private sector consultants broaden the range of specialized consulting services offered by an SBDC.

Written contracts describing the relationship, compensation and deliverables between the host partner and private sector consultant are required, and the Regional Director is accountable for the quality of work delivered.

While working on FSBDC time, all private sector consultants must represent themselves as a FSBDC member, and not as a representative of any other entity. This extends to position identification with their respective FSBDC region, presentation content, business cards and other collateral.

***Faculty Member —***

An employee of the host institution who has been made, in part, of the SBDC budget to provide consulting services, in addition to teaching or other faculty responsibilities for the host institution.

***Professional Volunteer —***

An individual that is not compensated for performing services for the benefit of the SBDC.

Volunteers must meet the same standards as other SBDC personnel. As with all professional business consultants, Regional Directors are accountable for the quality of work of volunteers.

***Student —***

Students must be properly supervised to assure quality service, and the services they perform should commensurate with their level of skill and expertise.

Undergraduate students should not serve as primary consultants, i.e. directly engage with SBDC clients without proper supervision. Undergraduate students may support an SBDC consultant by

performing research, preparing pro forma financial reports, and engaging in other tasks to support the client engagement.

Graduate students who are qualified by experience and expertise may serve as primary consultants, i.e. directly engage with SBDC clients without supervision.

Undergraduate and Graduate student team projects that are offered for academic credit may count as SBDC reportable hours if the quality of the consulting is comparable to that provided by professional consultants; preparation time is reasonable in relation to the consulting provided, and the service meets the definition of consulting.

***Limit on Student Hours —***

Florida SBDC policy limits undergraduate and graduate student hours to no more than 25 percent of the center's overall performance goal contribution.

**Organizational Charts**

It is crucial that the State Office understands each center's organizational structure and how it fits into the overall network. A current organizational chart should be submitted each year or any time there is a major change in leadership or structure. Charts may be requested by the State Office at any time. In addition to key positions and service areas, at least one individual of the regional leadership team should be designated as the number two in command in the event the Regional Director is unable to fulfill their duties due to an extended absence.

# **Policy Title:** Process and procedures for Extended or Unexpected Absences Succession Planning of the Florida SBDC Network

**Responsible Department:** Florida SBDC Network State Office, State Director

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the process for reporting absences of Network leadership and personnel.

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC Network State Office and Regional Leadership

## **Policy Statement:**

The central component of the Network's success is our people. The State Director is responsible for ensuring continuity of operations and safeguarding against loss of institutional knowledge due to retirement, loss of employees, and other catastrophic events. In order to protect against such losses the State Office regularly monitors organizational charts and regional succession plans, as well as reviews staff turnover during CIPs. Open communication surrounding planned and unexpected absences is essential to ensure seamless operations of the organization.

## ***Absences***

### **State Office Leadership**

The Florida SBDC Network State Office maintains a clearly defined organizational chart that outlines the reporting structure in the event any member of the State Office leadership team has any extended or unexpected absences. The State Office will report any extended absences of leadership to the Regional Directors in order to ensure continuity of operations. At a minimum, this communication will include the position and the short/long term plan of support.

### **Regional Directors**

Each Regional Director should provide a current organizational chart, annually, with at least one staff member designated for succession in the event the Regional Director has a period of extended or unexpected absence. In the event of an extended absence, the Regional Director or designee shall report the absence via email to the State Director in order to ensure continuity of operations. At a minimum, this communication shall include the position and the short/long term plan of support.

### **Network Personnel**

All absences, planned or unplanned, should be reported in accordance with regional host institution's human resources policies and procedures. The State Office shall be informed in the event that an extended absence impacts a network wide initiative or committee.

It is recommended that regional centers utilize an internal calendar that is accessible to all staff, to ensure open communication and awareness.

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**Policy Title:** Process and procedures for filling key positions of the Florida SBDC Network

**Responsible Department:** Florida SBDC Network State Office, State Director

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the hiring expectations of key leadership personnel.

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC Network State Office and Regional Leadership

**Policy Statement:**

## ***State Office***

### **State Director**

In the event the position of State Director is vacated, a replacement should be hired based on the policies outlined in the [SBA Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) and [SBA Terms and Conditions](#).

The America's SBDC Leadership Institute, as well as, other member state SBDC state directors are available to assist university leaders in developing and implementing a customized transition plan. A checklist of recommended steps is also provided by the ASBDC.

The position classification and compensation should be at a level appropriate to meet statutory requirements and attract and retain a senior executive with the experience and skills necessary to be successful and exceed performance expectations.

### **State Office Key Staff**

In addition to the State Director, Associate State Directors are expected to provide sufficient advance notice of an extended absence so that adjustments in office procedures and responsibilities can be made to accommodate the absence.

To mitigate the impact of an absence and to ensure the State Office is able to continue to function properly in the event of an absence of any key staff member, the State Office Leadership has developed and implemented an annual cross-training plan.

Permanently vacated positions will be filled following University of West Florida procedures.

### **Regional Directors**

Each center is required to develop a succession plan to ensure the continued operation of the center in the case of a planned or unplanned absence of the regional director and other key center positions.

The host institution shall follow the Director Search Process outlined in the Terms and Conditions of the contract.

## **Director Search Process Requirements**

### **Interim Regional Director**

- The Interim Regional Director shall have full authority to fulfill all duties and responsibilities of the position.
- The Interim Regional Director may not serve for a period longer than one year per any given appointment.
  - In the event the position cannot be filled permanently within a year, the Host may request an extension 90 days prior to the one year mark.

### **Position Description**

- Based on needs assessment and strategic opportunities, the position description for the Regional Director should be reviewed for currency and accuracy and revised as appropriate.
- The position description should be reviewed and approved by the State Director prior to announcing the position.
- The position classification and compensation should be at a level appropriate to meet statutory requirements and attract and retain a senior executive with the experience and skills necessary to be successful and exceed performance expectations.

### **Position Announcement**

- **A national search shall be conducted to fill the Regional Director position.** As such, the position announcement shall be advertised nationally to ensure a diverse and extensive pool of qualified candidates in compliance with policies set forth by the Host Institution's Department of Human Resources and the strategic objectives of the Florida SBDC Network.
- The State Office is available to support the hiring authority in promoting the position within the national SBDC association.

### **Search Committee**

- The Host Partner Institution shall identify the hiring authority for the Regional Director position, in accordance with the institution's human resources policies and procedures.
- It is recommended that the position's direct supervisor serve in this capacity.
- The search committee shall be composed of a diverse and inclusive group of internal and external partners, familiar with the mission and strategic goals of the Florida SBDC Network, to ensure the selection and success of a new Regional Director.
- **The search committee must include the Florida SBDC State Director or another member of the State Office leadership team.**
- As a best practice, all efforts should be made to include an acting member of the Network's Advisory Board on the search committee. The State Office is available to coordinate this request.
- A minimum of three finalists shall be interviewed in person prior to selecting the new Regional Director.
- The hiring authority shall provide monthly status updates to the State Director on the search process and position finalists. It is required by our Federal funding partner that regular updates are given to SBA District offices on the status of the search and regional leadership position.

## **Policy Title:** Process and procedures for onboarding with the Florida SBDC Network

**Responsible Department:** Florida SBDC Network State Office, Director of Finance

**Revision Date:** January 25, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the process for onboarding with the network.

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC Network Leadership, direct supervisors and administrative personnel

### **Policy Statement**

#### ***Onboarding***

A successful new hire onboarding process is essential to ensure that new hires fully understand the work and mission of the Florida SBDC and are fully equipped to represent the network in a way that ensures consistency in service delivery across the state. **The Network utilizes a two step onboarding process** to ensure that both the new hire is a good fit for the Florida SBDC and vice versa.

#### **New Hire Step One**

Upon hiring a new employee, the Regional Center should complete the New Hire eForm on the Intranet. Step One provides the new hire with access to the Florida SBDC Intranet to access the Conflict of Interest, Ethics, and Acceptable Use of AI Policy and New Hire Orientation, as well as access to the CRM and other tools designated by his or her direct supervisor.

To expedite access to Network databases and tools, it is recommended this form be completed prior to the new hire's start date. Once access is granted to the Intranet, the new hire must read and complete the Conflict of Interest Policy eForm. Only eForms submitted through the Intranet will be accepted. The COI must be completed prior to receiving access to the CRM. Within two weeks of their start date, the new FSBDCN employee must review the FSBDC orientation and perform favorably on the quizzes. This form should be submitted by the RD, direct supervisor or their designee.

#### **The State Office is responsible for:**

- Adding new hire to internal directory
- Adding new hire to Constant Contact directory
- Creating an Intranet user profile
- Adding the user to their regional group
  - Initiating access to their regional Center's Corner folders and appearance in their regional staff directory when searched on the Intranet.
- Sending the new hire a welcome email with instructions for onboarding
  - Orientation being the focus, this must be completed to receive tools and Salesforce access.
- Creating a Salesforce account for the new hire and adding the requested permissions from the eform to their account.

#### **After the new hire completes the COI:**

- The State Office Initiates the Salesforce account access and tools listed on the new hire eForm. Other network tools are by request and dependent on available space within the State Office master accounts. Additional tools may be requested through the [Network Tools Request eForm](#) on the Intranet.

### **New Hire Co-Consulting**

- Each region shall assign a peer mentor to help train new consultants. New consultants are expected to receive a minimum of 5 contact hours of co-consulting sessions prior to consulting clients on their own. These observations are not to be entered into the CRM as separate Sessions. Instead, the peer mentor should record the Session as normal and annotate the name and activity of the mentee within the Session Notes field. The consultant-mentee will then record their time as a Non-Consulting Activity. The new consultant should meet with his/her direct supervisor to discuss observations from these sessions prior to consulting on their own. The direct supervisor should verify that the incoming consultant demonstrates the requisite skills to successfully consult their clients. New hires should also complete any requisite onboarding or training at the host institution.

**The Conflict of Interest, Orientation, and Co-Consulting must be completed prior to Step 2.**

### **New Hire Step 2**

*Upon hiring, direct supervisors must submit the Materials Request eForm on the Intranet.* This form should only be submitted after the new hire has successfully completed the Conflict of Interest, Orientation, and Co-Consulting to the satisfaction of their supervisor and is ready to begin meeting with clients individually. The Intranet will send an email notification to the State Office.

### **The State Office is responsible for:**

- Ordering new hire shirts
- Ordering new hire name badge
- Creating the new hire a Business Card proof for the Marketing Coordinator to approve.
  - **Complete contact information including a phone number, email address, and physical address are mandatory fields for business cards.**

After the Materials Request form is received at the State Office, materials will be added to a bi-weekly order placed by the State Office. Materials are shipped directly to the new hire's region.

It is the responsibility of the individual receiving name tags and business cards to approve the proof prior to the order being placed. **Any requests for corrections after the proof has been received will be the responsibility of the region.**

## **Policy Title:** Process and procedures for separating from the Florida SBDC Network

**Responsible Department:** Florida SBDC Network State Office Leadership

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the process for separating from the network.

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC Network Leadership, direct supervisors and administrative personnel

### **Policy Statement:**

For the protection of the Network and its clients, due care should be exercised upon employee separation from the Network and the following steps should be taken:

### ***Employee Exit eForm***

***An exit form is required to be submitted for all individuals separating from the organization. The exit form should be submitted at a minimum 48 hours prior to a departing employee's end date. Contact the State Office in the event extenuating circumstances prevent timely submission.***

### ***Once the exit eForm has been submitted:***

The Intranet sends an email notification to State Office personnel.

### **The State Office is responsible for:**

- Removing the employee from our internal directory
- Removing the employee from our Constant Contact directory
- Removing the employee from the Birthday list
- Removing the employee from all tools they had access to—referencing our HR TRACKING - Network Tools spreadsheet to ensure the correct tools to remove.
- Blocking/Removing the employee's Intranet account
- Removing the employee from their regional group
- Removing the employee from Salesforce

### ***Asset Protection***

The Regional Director and their staff shall make every effort to protect, safeguard, and recover any assets of the Florida SBDC Network, including but not limited to the data held by the FSBDCN on its clients.

- Access privileges to all FSBDCN computer network systems (including but not limited to CRMs, databases, data resources, contact lists, research or analysis tools, telecommunications accounts or services, social media accounts, calendaring software, data or file storage mediums or services) shall be revoked with immediate effect. The Regional Director must notify the State Office 2 business days prior to employee exit.
- Copies of all data (including calendars) associated with FSBDCN-provided email addresses shall be retained according to the Florida SBDC Network Data Retention Policy.
- Data associated with email addresses or data storage provided by a separated employee's host institution shall be retained in accordance with the policies of the host institution.

- Retain copies of past calendars and provide upon request

**Policy Title:** Annual expectations for Florida SBDC Network personnel

**Responsible Department:** Florida SBDC Network State Office, Director of Strategic Programs

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines annual expectations of Florida SBDC personnel

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** All Florida SBDC Network Personnel

**Policy Statement:**

In addition to annual performance goals, all network personnel are required to complete the following annual tasks to ensure familiarity with Network policies, reinforce engagement and connection within a larger network, and maintain professional competencies that ensure clients are receiving the highest degree of consulting, as trends and business practices continue to evolve.

***Conflicts of Interest***

Before engaging in any service activity or being provided access to FSBDCN records or computer resources, all Florida SBDC Network personnel (employees, independent contractors, consultants, instructors, students, and volunteers) must adhere to the Florida SBDC Network Code of Professional Conduct and sign the *Conflict of Interest and Ethics Policy for Florida Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network Employees* available on the [Intranet](#). The policy includes enforceable elements safeguarding the organization from actual or apparent conflicts in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 2701.112.

**In addition to signing the eForm during onboarding, the policy should be reviewed and signed annually prior to January 31st. Failure to comply is subject to freezing of all Network databases and tools.**

***Engagement***

Engagement is the extent to which employees are motivated to contribute to organizational success and are willing to apply discretionary effort to accomplish tasks important to the achievement of organizational goals’.

The Florida SBDC Network utilizes Gallup's Q12 survey to annually gauge employee satisfaction and engagement. Each Regional Director should take steps to ensure that all staff members participate in the Q12 survey when it is open, typically during the summer.

Survey results are analyzed during the Strategic Planning process and used to make continuous improvements to the Network’s culture.

## ***Professional Development***

During the annual ACF process, Regional Directors and their leadership teams should analyze existing staff competencies and skill sets, including customer satisfaction. At this time, any professional development needs should be identified and accounted for in the budget for the coming year. At the same time, staff should be encouraged by their supervisors to identify any training or certifications that they are interested in pursuing.

Regional Directors are required to ensure all regional staff, regardless of classification, complete a minimum of 20 hours of continuing education in an area of expertise that aligns with their area of specialty or builds capacity of the region. For consultants this should be core or specialized areas defined in the Network's Strategic Plan. Regional Directors must appropriately allocate PD needs as part of the budget planning process. Some regions may have a policy that requires more than 20 hours of continuing education a year.

Regional Directors may require annual PD plans be developed for all regional staff, including sub-center staff, as part of the annual planning process. Any PD plans must outline a minimum of 20 hours of continuing education in areas that enhance professional skills and help strengthen the operation of the center. OPS employees may be required to have a PD plan unless they are working in a time-limited position for less than 6 months. Please note that this is no longer a State Office requirement, and PD Plans will not be examined as part of the CIP process

PD consists of time spent in workshops, classes, and targeted training sessions that provide information to enhance an employee's ability to carry out their job responsibilities and grow professionally. To receive PD credit, the training event must be, at a minimum, one hour in length. The respective Regional Director must approve exceptions to this policy in advance.

Regional Directors are responsible for managing the PD of all regional staff, ensuring the recordkeeping process in Salesforce is adhered to ([reference and link to the Professional Development Process: Tracking PD Activity](#))

Through the Network's annual Continuous Improvement Program (CIP), the State Office monitors regional compliance with PD policies and will review PD records in Salesforce during the CIP process.

***The following are eligible for professional development credit (1 credit per hour unless otherwise noted):***

- ASBDC conference, instructional seminars and workshops
  - Regional centers are encouraged to send staff as their budget allows and where a strategic emphasis is applied towards those attending.
- SBA workshops, information sessions, and training sessions
- The Florida SBDC Network annual conference (hours to be determined by State Office)
  - Regional centers are encouraged to send staff as their budget allows.
- Florida SBDC Network training sessions, Knowledge Exchange webinars, and town halls
- Florida SBDC Network Employee Orientation (Note: 6 PD credits)
- University and College Training sessions, seminars, and courses
- Trainings required by the host partner institution
- Other accredited organizations' training, seminars and courses
- Trainings conducted by an external partner but hosted by the regional center as part of contracted deliverables

***The following are ineligible for professional development credit:***

- Planning, organizational and/or staff meetings
- Retreats (with the exception of set aside training hours)
- Client Training conducted by a regional staff member and hosted by the regional center as part of contracted deliverables
- Exhibiting or tabling at events or conferences
- Special events and banquets where instruction does not take place (ex: awards luncheons)
- Breakfast, lunch, or dinner speeches (where targeted information and/or instruction does not take place)

One professional development credit will be allowed per one hour of in class and/or virtual training. Recorded training videos will be considered on a case by case basis by the State Office.

All training hours should be tracked in the CRM as a Non-Consulting Activity record as a “Professional Development” Activity type.

### ***Strategic Certifications***

Consultants are expected to have at least one advanced certification from an accredited source aligned with the Florida SBDC Network’s strategic areas. Regional Directors have discretion to recommend additional certifications as they deem necessary to meet regional goals and initiatives. Consultants hired without an advanced certification should complete one within three (3) years of their hire date. The certifications are also available on the Intranet under the **PD** tab. The list of certifications is a working document that should be reviewed regularly for additional opportunities/certifications that may be added. Suggested certifications should be requested in writing and will be discussed during the next State leadership meeting prior to being added to the master list. Professional staff are encouraged to pursue certifications in their area of specialty. At the Regional Director’s discretion, consultants are highly encouraged to pursue continual learning beyond their area of expertise to foster diversity in capabilities.

### ***Profiles***

All Florida SBDC Network personnel shall maintain current profiles on the Intranet. The profiles shall outline the individual’s experience, expertise and professional certifications. Regional Directors or their delegates are responsible for annually reviewing and ensuring staff profiles are up to date.

### ***Lobbying***

Federal law prohibits the use of program funds to lobby Congress or agencies concerning specified federal actions (31 USC § 1352). In addition, OMB’s Uniform Guidance at 2 C.F.R. § 200.450 provides that lobbying activities are generally unallowable costs, and defines unallowable activities as well as the limited activities that are allowed. Therefore, all Florida SBDC Network personnel are strictly prohibited from lobbying. **Refer to the Perception Section for more information.**



## **Policy Title:** Florida SBDC Network Employee Recognition and Appreciation

**Responsible Department:** Florida SBDC Network State Director

**Revision date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the expectations for employee recognition

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC Network State Office leadership; Regional leadership

### **Policy Statement:**

A key objective of the People Pillar is to “award top performers and excellence among staff across the network.” The State Office facilitates network wide recognition through the Florida SBDC Network Performance Excellence Awards and nominations to the national awards outlined below. Regional Directors are encouraged to develop their own internal recognition programs as well as participate in their host institutions’ and other regional recognition programs. Regional leadership and/or marketing coordinators are encouraged to submit a News & Outreach Submission [eForm](#) to notify the State Office of any special recognition received by staff.

### ***Network Recognition***

The **Florida SBDC Network Performance Excellence Awards** provide network personnel with a unique opportunity to recognize and demonstrate appreciation to peers, students, volunteers, partners, centers, and legislators who contribute to the success of the network’s vision—to create a better Florida for all by helping businesses grow. The Florida SBDC Awards Program provides an opportunity to publicly recognize and reward select individuals and organizations for their spirited, innovative, and extraordinary efforts and contributions; as well as their commitment to excellence in service and performance on behalf of the Florida SBDC Network.

Regional leadership is encouraged to submit a nominee for each category in which a member of their staff is eligible.

### **Regional Awards**

- **Student Project of the Year Award (Undergraduate & Graduate)** - The Florida SBDC Network is committed to contributing to student success. This award recognizes one undergraduate and graduate student or student team project from each SBDC region that creates an experiential learning opportunity for the student(s) while providing SBDC client value. **Regional award winners are eligible for selection for the Florida SBDC Student Project of the Year Award.**
- **Volunteer of the Year Award** - Volunteers provide opportunities to expand and enhance service capacity and capability to meet the diverse and complex needs of SBDC clients. This award recognizes one volunteer from each SBDC region that has provided significant, direct contributions with respect to advocacy, consulting, training, program development or special

projects. **Regional award winners are eligible for selection for the Florida SBDC Volunteer of the Year Award.**

- **Ambassador of the Year Award** - The Florida SBDC Network is committed to fostering an environment that attracts and retains a workforce that is engaged, supported, and motivated to advance the mission and vision of the network. This award recognizes special employees from each SBDC region for their outstanding contributions and strong commitment in supporting customer, center, and network success. **Regional awardees are eligible for selection for the Florida SBDC Ambassador of the Year Award.**
- **Performance Excellence of the Year Award** - The Florida SBDC Network is committed to the efficient and effective delivery of personalized and professional business consulting services that achieve network strategic objectives while exceeding performance expectations. This award recognizes one consultant from each SBDC region for their demonstrated commitment to performance excellence demonstrated by their contribution to customer growth and success. **Regional award winners are eligible for selection for the Florida State Star Award.**
- **Outstanding Resource Partner of the Year Award** - Partnerships are essential to our ability to fulfill our mission and vision. This award recognizes one partner organization that provides significant, direct contribution to the regional SBDC with respect to advocacy, financial support, partnership building or advising. **Regional awardees are not eligible for a Florida level award.**

### **State Awards**

A committee of resource partners, state office staff, network personnel, and/or former award recipients will evaluate and rate the regional nominees in each of the above State Award categories.

Recommendations will be forwarded to the State Office Leadership Team for final review and selection.

The State Awards will be selected based on the nomination criteria for each category relevant to the nominees' contribution to the betterment of the network. In addition to the awards listed above, awards are given for the following:

- **Florida Rising Star of the Year Award** - The State Office established the Rising Star Award to honor one outstanding talent of the network's young professionals to celebrate their achievements and contributions. As part of the award, the State Office may opt to recognize one individual under the age of 40 with less than five years of service who has made a marked difference in their center and community.
- **Florida Team Spirit of the Year Award** - The State Office established the Team Spirit Award to honor one network professional who demonstrates a true team spirit and self-motivated leadership—takes charge, takes initiative, and rallies others—in helping the network achieve strategic initiatives critical to our success.
- **Florida Outstanding Resource Partner of the Year Award** - The State Office may opt to select one outstanding resource partner that provided a significant and direct contribution to the statewide network with respect to advocacy, financial support, partnership building or advising.
- **Florida Alan Cowart Pioneer of the Year Award** - The State Office may opt to select for recognition one center (and its individual/s) that demonstrated innovative thinking in process improvement and/or service that resulted in a significant contribution to organizational improvement and enhanced performance. The awardee(s) will be determined through the Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) discovery process.
- **Florida State Office Distinguished Service Award** - The State Office established this award to recognize one individual from the State Office who made significant contributions to the network's mission and purpose by providing exceptional customer service and support to

regional offices across the state. The individual is a staff member of the State Office who is not an Associate Director and has been with the network for at least one year.

- **Capital Access Lifetime Achievement Award** - The State Office will recognize consultants who have achieved \$50,000,000 - \$250,000,000+ of capital access for clients during their tenure with the Florida SBDC Network. These awardees were determined from all historical files within the CRM pulling from impact-related sessions.
- **New Business Starts Lifetime Achievement Award** - The State Office will recognize consultants who have achieved 75 - 200+ in new business starts during their tenure with the Florida SBDC Network. These awardees were determined from all historical files within the CRM pulling from impact-related sessions.
- **Laura Subel Lifetime Achievement Award** - The State Office will recognize consultants who have achieved \$50,000,000 - \$250,000,000+ of government contracts for clients during their tenure with the Florida SBDC Network. These awardees were determined from all historical files within the CRM pulling from impact-related sessions.
- **Jerry Cartwright Lifetime Achievement Award** - The State Office may opt to recognize an individual who has made significant contribution and impact through a lifetime of dedication to the network. The individual must have more than 20 years of exceptional service to the Network.
- **Service Year Awards** - The State Office will recognize individuals who have been employed by the network for 5,10, 15, 20, 25+ years.

## *National Recognition*

### **ASBDC**

- **State Star** - The State Star is chosen by their SBDC networks, and are among the best of the best — those who demonstrate exemplary performance, make significant contributions to their networks, and are deeply committed to the success of America's small businesses.
  - **Nominated by:** State Office
  - **Eligibility:** Winner of the Florida State Star Award
- **40 under 40** - ASBDC accepts nominations for the "40 under 40" awards. This recognition celebrates the passion young leaders exhibit in serving the SBDC and their clients.
  - **Nominated by:** State Office
  - **Eligibility:** Winner of the Florida Rising Star Award

### **SBA National Small Business Week Awards Program**

- **Small Business Development Center Excellence and Innovation Award** - This award honors a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Service Center for excellence in providing value to small businesses from diverse backgrounds and advancing program delivery and management through innovation
  - **Nominated by:** State Office
  - **Eligibility:** Winner of the Region of the Year Award

## **Strategic Planning Pillar: Product - Diversify, Enhance and Expand Service Offering**

### **Policy Title: Florida SBDC Consulting Services**

**Responsible Department:** Director of Strategic Programs

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** Process and procedure for conducting consulting services

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** All Florida SBDC leadership and consultants

#### **Policy Statement:**

Business advising Consulting is one of three services the Small Business Administration requires all SBDCs to provide through all stages of the business life cycle. It is the goal of the Florida SBDC Network that existing or prospective clients do not travel more than one hour to access an SBDC service location. Consulting services are typically delivered through a combination of in person meetings at the regional service center, sub-regional center, outreach location, or at the place of business. Virtual consulting may also be used. By law, SBDCs may not charge fees for core consulting services. SBDCs may charge reasonable fees to cover costs for specialized services and trainings. Fee-based specialized services (such as EMPs or other programs) are allowed only when approved in writing by the State Director. Such fees are considered Program Income and must be used to expand SBDC services to further organizational strategic objectives and done so in accordance with federal regulations and OMB circulars. Program Income may not be used as required match funding.

#### ***Hours of Operation***

Lead and service centers shall be available to the public during the normal hours of the business community throughout the year, as appropriate. In addition, provisions should be made to provide evening and weekend assistance, both online and in service centers, as appropriate to meet local community demands and needs.

**Complete regional contact information is required to be maintained on both regional and network websites. This includes an active phone number with answering service, address, and email.**

Scheduled closures should be posted in advance on the network calendar on the intranet at the beginning of the year. Emergency closures must be reported by email to the State Director as soon as possible.

#### ***Consulting***

##### **Substantive Consulting**

Substantive consulting is direct (contact) and non-direct (prep) consultation that has sufficient market value to be constituted as a billable service in a private sector engagement. Substantive consulting is one-on-one consulting and addresses a specific need of that individual business. *“Would a private sector business management consultant charge a client for work?”*.

## **Non-Substantive Consulting**

Non-substantive activities do not count as consulting for reporting and goal attainment purposes. Examples of non-substantive activities include, but are not limited to:

- contact with a client or potential client for the sole purpose of scheduling an appointment;
- providing the client or potential client with non-business information, such as directions, office hours, description of services, referral to another resource;
- "checking in" with a client;
- collecting or producing information for network purposes (e.g. economic impact, success stories), or
- mailing or emailing of general information or materials (e.g. newsletters, workshop promotions, etc.).

These activities are considered administrative and should be reported as non-consulting activities only.

## **Group Consulting**

Consulting that occurs when one consultant works with multiple businesses at the same time, rather than providing individual, one-on-one consulting should not be recorded as prep and contact hours for each client. This type of assistance does not meet the criteria of substantive consulting and should be reported as a training event.

## ***Areas of Consulting (AOC)***

All Regional Centers are expected to maintain a workforce with the combined experience to provide the **minimum core competencies** outlined below:

### **Start-up**

Consulting that is directly attributed to assisting individuals in starting new businesses, including providing guidance on business formation, structure, registration, regulation, and business taxes. This may include limited support in helping guide in the development of a business plan. Excluded from this category is material work performed in support of the business plan (e.g. research, critiquing draft), marketing plan and strategy development, and financial analysis, loan packaging or access to capital assistance.

### **Business and Strategic Planning**

Consulting that is directly attributed to assisting existing businesses with strategic or business plan development and/or implementation, including, but not limited to, analyzing the business' mission, vision, strategies and goals, overall critique of plan, and performance measurement and accountability. Assistance may also include the facilitation of strategic plan development for select target market client businesses. Assistance also includes business continuation strategy development including selling, merging or closing a business, as well as disaster preparedness, mitigation, and recovery.

### **Capital Access**

Consulting directly attributed to assisting an existing or prospective business access capital, including providing loan package services, such as:

- assessing project feasibility to determine capital need;

- identifying and assessing potential debt and/or equity funders and/or other financing alternatives;
- assisting in the preparation of loan packages (e.g. applications, projections, pro formas or other support documentation) for the request for a loan or other request for financing/investment;
- preparing a client for lender/investor presentations, or facilitating conferences with or responding to lender/investor inquiries on behalf of a client business.

In accordance with SBA guidance, consultants should report both Capital Transactions, as well as, continue to report Capital Access dollars. **See the Performance section for further information.**

In delivering these services, consultants must keep in mind several constraints imposed by regulation:

1. SBDCs should help prepare clients to represent themselves to lenders. While SBDCs may attend meetings with lenders to assist clients in preparing loan packages, SBDCs may not take a direct role in representing a client in loan negotiations (i.e. the consultant should not be an ‘advocate’ for the client, or advocate on their behalf).
2. SBDCs should inform clients that loan packaging assistance does not guarantee receipt of a loan.
3. SBDCs may not make loans, service loans or make credit decisions regarding the award of loans. If an SBDC is located in a host institution that makes loans, the host institution must assure that the loan program is managed separately from the SBDC program and SBDC personnel do not participate in the lender’s review of the loan application, qualifications of the borrower, due diligence investigation and related credit decisions.
4. With respect to SBA guarantee programs, SBDCs may help a client prepare the loan application and accompany a client applicant appearing before the SBA but may not advocate, recommend approval, or otherwise attempt to influence the SBA to provide financial assistance to SBDC clients.
5. An SBDC cannot collect fees for helping a client prepare an application for SBA financial assistance.
6. **Financial statements and loan documents prepared by Florida SBDC consultants must have the following disclaimer stamped or printed on them:**
  - a. *“The Florida SBDC has prepared the accompanying financial statement based on the assumptions provided by management. Neither the SBDC nor its personnel are licensed by the State of Florida to practice public accounting and therefore express no opinion or any other form of assurance on the statements or underlying assumptions.”*

## **Market/Sales Growth Assistance**

Services include conducting strategic research to identify new markets, preparing and analyzing sales and financial projections, and ability to professionally critique a business marketing plan or campaign for expanding into a new market. Consulting must specifically include assisting client businesses do business with the government and investigate and realize opportunities internally. Market Growth Service Areas of Strategic Importance (Special Emphasis) include:

**Government Contracting Assistance** – consulting directly attributed to assisting existing businesses interested in obtaining contracts with the Department of Defense (DOD), other federal agencies, state and local government agencies and government prime contractors. This includes, but is not limited to, bid/proposal preparation, securing registrations, securing federal, state and local certifications, marketing and bid solicitation, networking, and contract administration and performance. Government Contracting also covers SBIR / STTR assistance,

for both contracts and grants (depending on the agency, SBIRs or STTRs may be awarded as either a contract or a grant). No other government grant assistance is allowed.

In addition, a range of networking events are sponsored or co-sponsored providing opportunities to connect businesses with agency buying officers and prime contractors. **Refer to the APEX Appendix for clients meeting the criteria for APEX consulting.**

***International Market/Export Assistance*** – consulting directly attributed to assisting existing manufacturers with strategic business assessments and developing and implementing international export marketing plans for new-to-export, new-to-market segments. Included in this area is educational training necessary to facilitate the businesses international mission, vision, strategies and goals, through the nationally NASBITE-certified, Florida Export Certification Program.

### **Cash Flow and Business Management Assistance**

Consulting that is directly attributed to assisting businesses with literacy in business cash flow and financial and business management, including cost control management techniques, completing feasibility studies, or completing financial analysis not related to the preparation of a loan package or request for financing. Assistance may also include conducting financial analysis health checks and building financial management strategies and solutions using financial analysis/strategy software or other appropriate applications.

### **Other Assistance**

**TBD - discuss with Data Governance Group**

### **Consulting Tree**

***The following consulting tree should be used when recording sessions in the CRM:***

**100 - Start-up Assistance**

100 - Start-up Assistance

110 - Business Entity Selection

120 - Start-up Assistance/Materials

**200 - Business Plan Assistance**

200 - Business Plan Assistance

210 - Business Plan Review / Critique

220 - Strategic Plan Review/Critique

225 - Strategic Plan Facilitation

230 - Business Succession

240 - Business Continuity

245 - Disaster Recovery

250 - Buy/Sell business

260 - Franchising

Cyber Security

**300 - Market / Growth Assistance**

300 - Market / Growth Assistance

310 - Marketing Research

315 - Market/Feasibility Study

320 - Marketing Plan Development

330 - Advertising & Promotions



340 - Business Certification DBE/MBE

350 - Government Procurement

360 - Exporting

365 - Importing

370 - Strategic Assessment

380 - Web/Social Media

#### **400 - Capital Access Assistance**

400 - Capital Access Assistance

410 - Sources of Capital

420 - Loan Package Development

421 - Bank Loan App Prep

422 - SBA Loan App Prep

423 - Other Govt Loan App Prep

425 - Export Loan

426 - Disaster Loan

430 - Equity Investment Capital

440 - SBIR Proposal / Grant

#### **500 - Financial Management Assistance**

500 - Financial Management Assistance

510 - Financial Analysis & Review

520 - Cash Flow Management & Planning

530 - Financial Statements

540 - Accounting & Recordkeeping

550 - Job Costing

560 - Tax Planning

570 - Business Valuation

**1000 - Other Assistance**

1000 - Other Assistance

1005 - DISC Assessments

1010 - Human Resources

1020 - Technology / Computer Systems

1030 - Intellectual Property

1040 - Customer Service / Relations

1060 - Contractual / Legal Issues

1070 - Not For Profit

1090 - Customer Follow-up

**2000 - Survey**

2000 - Annual Survey Response

## ***Prohibited Services***

### **Accounting Services**

SBDCs must not engage in the practice of accounting as a certified public accountant or public accounting firm. Florida SBDC consultants who are qualified by experience and training to practice as a certified public accountant (CPA), or other legal and recognized accountant designation, may do so in a general way, but must make appropriate disclosures and disclaimers to that effect. This does not preclude SBDCs from performing what can be construed as general accounting services, such as financial assessments and assistance with pro formas.

### **Legal Services**

SBDCs must not engage in the practice of law. Consultants must not provide individual legal advice, represent a client in litigation or any legal proceeding, or otherwise practice law as defined by the State of Florida. Florida SBDC consultants who are qualified by experience and training to discuss legal issues may do so in a general way, but must not engage in an attorney-client relationship and must make appropriate disclosures and disclaimers to that effect.

SBDCs may offer training courses on business law issues, provided that legal topics are presented by individuals qualified by training and experience to address such topics. In furtherance of their educational mission, SBDCs may negotiate arrangements with law schools to offer clients access to supervised student legal clinics that are approved by the state attorney licensing entity. The SBDC must make appropriate disclosures and disclaimers to that effect.

### **Non-Advisory Capacity**

Consultants should ensure that they are working with clients in an advisory capacity only. Consultants should refrain from performing duties that would otherwise be conducted by a paid employee of the business.

# **Policy Title: Florida SBDC Training Educational Programs**

**Responsible Department:** Director of Strategic Programs

**Revision date:** February 23, 2024

- I. Policy/Purpose:** Process and procedure for conducting trainings
- II. Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** All Florida SBDC leadership, consultants, and personnel involved in regional training programs
- III. Policy Statement:**

## ***Training Programs***

The SBA requires SBDCs to provide educational training programs to small businesses. All Florida SBDCs assess the needs of small businesses in their regional market when developing training programs to facilitate business knowledge development. When possible, Regions should utilize strategic partnerships, including host organizations and other resource partners, to deliver program offerings. Furthermore, Regions are encouraged to collaborate across the State when offering training that is not unique to a specific geography and/or unlikely to result in a long-term client/consultant relationship (ex: How to Start a Business). Training may be delivered in person or virtually.

The SBA Notice of Funding Opportunity outlines the required documentation that is to be collected for each training opportunity. Furthermore, the SBA requires SBDCs to capture as much demographic information from attendees as possible. The Network CRM's training intake form is designed to collect all required information. All attendees should receive a satisfaction survey at the conclusion of a training. To ensure timely, accurate data collection it is expected that all regions will conduct those surveys in a centralized environment, utilizing the Network's designated event management platform.

SBDCs may charge reasonable fees to cover costs for specialized services and trainings.

## ***Information and Research***

The SBA also requires that SBDCs provide information and research services to small businesses. While this may be a function within a consulting engagement, the State Office employs a full time Research & Data Analyst Director, who supports consultants through in depth research and access to data resources. Regional centers are encouraged to utilize the State Office's resources to reduce duplication and increase efficiencies. Consultants may request research and information support from the State Office by completing the Rapid Research eForm on the Intranet.

## ***Specialized Services***

SBDCs must provide prospective and existing small business persons and entities with Consulting, and whenever practical, training and specialized services, concerning the formation, financing, management and operation of small business enterprises, reflecting local needs. [13 CFR §130.340(a)] Specialized Services are products or services offered that are not readily available or exceed the normal scope and standard suite of SBDC consulting and training services, i.e. unique or not systemic capacity of the national SBDC program, or specifically defined by authorizing regulation. Authorization for offering Specialized Services is at the discretion of the State Director of the Florida SBDC Network, and, when

necessary, the sponsor agency. Failure to obtain prior approval shall be considered a violation of the subcontract agreement and may result in the reduction, suspension or termination of award funding.

An SBDC may charge a reasonable fee to cover the costs of providing Specialized Services, which will be considered as Program Income. Reasonableness will be authorized by the State Director of the Florida SBDC Network by the Regional Director providing back-up data to support the fee structure. Fees may not be imposed for Consulting.

### ***Disclaimers***

The SBA, DOD, and other entities require certain language to be included in external facing materials. Products utilized to support events, training sessions, workshops and other services shall conform to the standards outlined in the **Perception Pillar and the Marketing and Branding Standards.**

## **Policy Title: Florida SBDC Client Eligibility**

**Responsible Department:** Director of Strategic Programs

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the eligibility requirements for Florida SBDC clients

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** All Florida SBDC personnel

### **Policy Statement:**

A Client is defined as:

- an eligible small business concern, if it exists, or
- an individual or group of individuals pursuing the establishment of an eligible small business concern, and
- completed the necessary registration requirements, and
- received qualified services.

### ***Eligibility Requirements***

Florida SBDC client eligibility is defined by federal and state statute. A business or individual is eligible to receive for Florida SBDC services if the following are true:

- 1) The business meets the definition of a small business concern per the Small Business Act.
- 2) The business meets SBA size standards
- 3) The business is organized for the pursuit of profit.
- 4) The business is physically located and actively operating in the state of Florida.
- 5) The business contributes to the prosperity of the state and federal economy through payment of taxes or use of American products, materials or labor.
- 6) The business ownership or prospective ownership self-certifies that “neither I nor my company are currently in suspension or debarment by a Federal Agency.”
- 7) The business does not or will not be in the business to do loan packaging, speculation, multi-sales distribution, gambling, investment or lending.
- 8) The business does not or will not engage in illegal activities defined by federal law.

#### ***Specific examples of business activities defined in #7 include:***

- Passive real estate investment firms when the loan is used for investment purposes.
- Firms involved in speculative activities that develop profits from fluctuations in price rather than through the normal course of trade, such as wildcatting for oil and dealing in commodities futures, when not part of the regular activities of the business.
- Dealers of rare coins and stamps.
- Firms involved in lending activities, such as banks, finance companies, factors, leasing companies, insurance companies, and any other firm whose stock in trade is money.
- Pyramid sales plans, where a participant's primary incentive is based on the sales made by an ever-increasing number of participants.
- Gambling activities, including any business whose principal activity is gambling. The rule does not restrict loans to businesses that obtain less than one-third of their annual gross

income from either the sale of official state lottery tickets under a state license, or legal gambling activities licensed and supervised by a state authority.

- Charitable, religious, or other nonprofit or eleemosynary institutions, government-owned corporations, consumer and marketing cooperatives, and churches and organizations promoting religious objectives.

All Customers must complete and sign a Request for Consulting Services form (Form 641; RFC/eRFC) prior to receiving services from the Florida SBDC.

## **EXCEPTIONS**

### ***Not-for-Profits –***

As a general rule, SBA's position is that, while the core purpose of the SBDC program remains the provision of direct assistance to small businesses, SBDCs may also, under certain circumstances, provide technical assistance to non-profit organizations. Specifically, where a significant portion of a non-profit organization's activities involve providing aid to small business concerns, it is permissible for an SBDC to provide counseling or training to such non-profits on the ground that such action still results in the provision of technical assistance to small business concerns.

### ***Non-Florida Businesses –***

Florida SBDC services are available to eligible aspiring and existing small businesses operating or planning to operate a business in Florida. Aspiring small businesses that do not have a physical presence in Florida should be encouraged to utilize the SBDC network of the state in which the client's business is located. A business is not required to have its headquarters or primary office located in Florida, so long as it has a presence in the state. A list of all SBDCs is available on the Association of Small Business Development Centers website ([AmericasSBDC.org](http://AmericasSBDC.org)).

Any Florida SBDC service center location is permitted to provide services to any eligible existing or prospective small business concern operating or planning to operate in Florida. While the client should be encouraged to utilize the expertise of the service center located in their designated market, it is the right of the client to elect which SBDC service center they receive services.

## **Marijuana-Related Activities**

The SBA provides guidance on providing assistance to marijuana-related businesses. The most current guidance is available on the [Intranet](#).

## ***Client Confidentiality and Record Requests***

### ***Adherence to this policy is not optional.***

All SBDC host partners and employees, including contracted employees, must 1) take the necessary precautions and legal recourse to protect privileged customer information in accordance with Part 102 of SBA's regulations (13 CFR Part 102), 2) annually complete the Florida SBDC Conflict of Interest and Ethics Policy eForm, and 3) adhere to the following policy concerning requests for customer information.

Client confidentiality is specifically protected by the Small Business Act, Section 21(a)(7). Unless required by law, all customer information received or produced by the SBDC is considered privileged information and shall not be released or disclosed to any third-party without the prior written consent of the

customer. This includes, but not limited to, customer's name, address, telephone number, email address, session records, financial information or other materials and documentation in the possession of the SBDC.

For purposes of this section, third party means any non-SBDC employee or organization, including but not limited to SBA, DOD, State of Florida, regional and local funding partners and host partner institutions.

## **EXCEPTIONS**

***The following exceptions apply to SBA only:***

- 1) The SBA Administrator is ordered to make such a disclosure by a court in any civil or criminal enforcement action initiated by a Federal or State agency; or
- 2) The SBA Administrator considers such a disclosure to be necessary for the purpose of conducting a financial audit of a small business development center, but a disclosure under this clause shall be limited to the information necessary for such audit.

Any request for customer information by any third-party must be forwarded to the State Director of the Florida SBDC Network for response.

Reference the [Acceptable Use Policy and Code of Ethics](#) for further guidance.

## ***Market Segments***

***For planning purposes, the Florida SBDC Network categorizes clients into three (3) market segments:***

The Florida SBDC is committed to reflecting the communities it serves. As such, Regions have the authority to identify the market segments that will balance the needs of the region while simultaneously meeting KPIs. Market segments are defined by each region during the annual ACF process.



### **Aspiring**

Individuals exploring business feasibility & seeking assistance with establishing a new business. No employees or sales



### **Emerging**

A business that has been in business less than 3 years. Beyond the phase of development with promise and desire for growth in both employment and revenues.



### **Established & Growth**

A business that has been in business more than 3 years. Demonstrate ability to generate significant revenue in their respective industry or market over an extended period of time with ability, capacity, and desire for continuous growth.



## **Policy Title: Florida SBDC Network Disaster Response Programs**

**Responsible Department:** Florida SBDC Network Director of Strategic Partnerships

**Revision date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** The policy below outlines the network's disaster response programs

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** State and Regional leadership; consultants on an as needed basis

**Policy Statement:**

### ***Disaster Background***

In addition to the key services outlined above, the Florida SBDC Network is charged with "*assisting existing businesses to plan for a natural or manmade disaster, and assisting businesses when such an event occurs. Such activities include creating business continuity and disaster plans, preparing disaster and bridge loan applications, and carrying out other emergency support functions.*" as specified in Florida Statute § 288.001.

The Florida SBDC Network is a part of the State Emergency Response Team (SERT), Emergency Support Function for Business, Industry and Economic Stabilization (ESF-18).

### ***Disaster Operations Plan***

Each Lead Center and its Service Centers must have in place disaster plans which are coordinated with the Host Institution to ensure delivery of services to small businesses in its area of operations. **See the Process Section for more guidance.**

### ***Disaster Activation***

In the event of a disaster, The Florida SBDC Network adheres to the activation processes of the Florida State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).

The State Director and the Director of Strategic Partnerships are responsible for establishing operational objectives during all phases of emergency management, in collaboration with Florida Commerce, SBA ODR&R, and the Regional Center Director(s) geographically impacted by the disaster.

In response to a disaster, Network staff support the connection of small business owners to disaster related resources application help, EBL, Physical Disaster Loan, EIDL

The State Office will facilitate regular network disaster preparedness training to coincide with the beginning of each hurricane season, and strategically throughout the year. The State Office will coordinate with SBA to issue any official updates in guidance at the time a disaster enters the recovery phase.

Regional Offices are expected to maintain a cadre of staff trained in disaster loan products to support emergency operations, and provide just in time training to other regional staff. Neighboring regions may be asked to provide consulting assistance to impacted regions in the event the demand for recovery services is higher than regional capacity, or when disaster impacts hinder normal operations of the

region to the extent service cannot be provided. The State Office maintains a disaster set aside funding pool to support operations above and beyond normal regional capacity.

## **Disaster Resources**

In the event of an active disaster, the State Office shall place a link to all official Federal and State disaster resources on the Florida SBDC website. Each region shall link to the resource page. Additional regional resources can be added independently to regional websites.

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Link</b>
Florida Emergency Management	<a href="http://www.FloridaDisaster.Org">www.FloridaDisaster.Org</a>
Florida Disaster for Business	<a href="http://www.FloridaDisaster.Biz">www.FloridaDisaster.Biz</a>
Florida Evacuations, Declarations, Business Recovery Centers, News and Updates	<a href="http://www.FloridaSBDC.Org/Disaster">www.FloridaSBDC.Org/Disaster</a>
FEMA	<a href="#">FEMA App</a> <a href="http://FEMA.gov">FEMA.gov</a>
Essential Community Services	Dial 211
Evacuation Route Traffic Conditions	<a href="#">FL511 Mobile App</a>
National Disaster Preparedness	<a href="http://Ready.gov">Ready.gov</a>
Disaster Distress Helpline:	<a href="http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline">www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline</a> 800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746
<p>The Disaster Distress Helpline is a 24/7, 365-day-a--year, national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories. Stress, anxiety, and other depression-like symptoms are common reactions after a disaster.</p>	

## **Mobile Assistance Centers (MACs)**

The Florida SBDC Network State Office maintains two Mobile Assistance Centers (MACs) and one mini MAC that can be deployed to areas that have been impacted by a disaster. The MACs are outfitted as mobile office space, and are fully equipped with the technological resources needed to assist clients in the time of a disaster. In the event of a disaster, the State Office will work with the impacted region and other state and federal agencies to identify the best placement and staffing for these units for both outreach and service to the impacted communities.

Regions may request access to the MACs outside of a disaster, for educational or promotional opportunities through the [eForm](#) on the Intranet. Any network staff who plans to drive the MAC or miniMAC must be approved by the State Office and be listed on the UWF insurance.

## **Strategic Planning Pillar: Process**

### **Policy Title: Florida SBDC Network Funding Guidelines**

**Responsible Department:** Florida SBDC State Director, Director of Finance, Director of Strategic Programs

**Revision date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines funding guidelines for the Florida SBDC Network

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC State Office and Regional Leadership, Budget Managers

**Policy Statement:**

### ***Funding Authority***

Federal and state regulation give the State Director of the Florida SBDC Network primary authority to allocate resources and expenditures under the organization's budget.

Within authority and reason, the State Director delegates financial management and oversight of individual center budgets to the regional director identified in the subcontract agreement.

### ***Funding Sources***

Financial support the Florida SBDC Network is provided by federal and state agencies, participating lead, regional and local service center host partner institutions, and local public and private entities.

### **Federal Funding**

#### ***Small Business Development Center (SBDC)***

Federal funding for the SBDC program is subject to congressional appropriation. The requirements for the SBDC program are enumerated in the Small Business Act and Code of Federal Regulations (15 U.S.C. §648, 13 CFR 130, among others) governing the program. By law, federal funds must be minimally matched 100 percent by participating partners, of which half must be cash and the remaining balance being in-kind (including indirect) contributions.

### ***APEX Accelerators –***

Federal APEX Accelerator funding is appropriated by the U.S. Congress and allocated through the Department of Defense (DOD). By law, federal funds must be minimally matched 35 percent (for non-distressed areas) by the partner host, comprising a combination of cash match and approved in-kind (including indirect) contributions.

### **State Funding**

State funding for the Florida SBDC program is appropriated by the Florida Legislature to the University of West Florida specifically designated for the Florida SBDC Network. State funding is subject to legislative appropriation and requirements for use are enumerated in Florida Statute §288.001. By law, state funds must be minimally matched 100 percent by the partner network. The sources of match must be from federal or other non state funding sources designated for the network. One-half of the match must be cash and the remaining balance being in any combination or in-kind (including waived indirect) contributions. State funding must not reduce or replace match provided by regional center host partners.

### **Local Funding (Match)**

The Florida SBDC Network is a shared partnership between its various vested partners. Shared financial partnering is specifically defined as a key requirement to participate as a regional center host partner. Therefore, regional center host partners are expected to significantly contribute and actively seek and leverage funding to help meet and exceed the match requirement to support program services that create a lasting positive economic impact on the community it serves.

Current state policy requires regional center host partners to provide total match funding equal to the amount of federal award funding received, of which half must be cash and the balance being in any combination of cash, in-kind and waived indirect contributions. While host partners are expected to provide significant direct investment, it is strongly encouraged that the host partner raise cash match support from other public and private organizations sharing the SBDC mission. Significant direct investment is defined as a host partner direct contribution from general revenues, generally referred to as Education and General (E&G) revenue, between 25 to 75 percent of the cash match required.

The minimum amount of total and cash match required by a regional center host partner is specified during the annual Application for Continuation Funding (ACF) proposal process and dependent on the total federal funding appropriated.

Host partners must maintain an updated list of ALL match funding sources and amounts, including grants, contracts and contributions. In addition, for each source of funds, documentation regarding the name and phone number of the donor/contractor/grantor, the amount of funding, the intended purpose and any requirements, stipulations or deliverables must be maintained and made available upon request.

### **Program Income**

All participating institutions should make sure their SBDC is following procedures for the collection, deposit, and accounting of SBDC program income. All institutions should have procedures set up to **ensure** funds are collected in accordance with state statutes to ensure safekeeping and internal control requirements. SBDCs should make sure they follow all procedures and guidelines for the collection and deposit of program income funds.

### OMB and SBA Requirements

Definition of program income as per 2 C.F.R. § 200.307, "Program income represents gross income earned by the recipient from the federally supported activities. Such earnings exclude interest earned on advances and may include, but will not be limited to, income from service fees, sale of commodities, usage or rental fees, and royalties on patents and copyrights."

The SBA, in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.307 stipulated the following regarding the disposition of Program Income:

1. All Revenues received from clients served by the SBDC under the auspices of this federal assistance program are considered to be program income.
2. Program income (e.g., fees collected from clients and/or attendees for training) may not be used as a source of matching funds.
3. Program income must be used to further the objectives of the SBDC Program and cannot be used for other purposes.
4. Program income shall be reported to the federal sponsoring agency.
5. The recipient must ensure all costs paid with program income funds are allowable and allocable.
6. Unused program income must be carried over to the subsequent budget period by the SBDC network; however, the aggregate amount of network program income cannot exceed 25 percent of the total SBDC budget (Federal and matching expenditures)

These same rules and definitions will also apply to program income generated by programs funded with state or other funds.

For all co-sponsored training where there will be a distribution of receipts in whole or in part to the co-sponsor, the training file for the activity must document clearly the role and responsibility of the SBDC and each participant receiving a share of the receipts. How the receipts were distributed must also be documented in the file. SBDCs are reminded that income received by the host institution for all co-sponsored programs **cannot** be used for matching purposes and should be used to further support the SBDC.

Adherence to the Program Income Policy will be reviewed by the State Director's Office on a continuing basis.

### Program Income Procedures and Guidelines

Guidelines to be used by all participating institutions receiving funds under the Florida Small Business Development Center Network program.

1. All SBDCs must be able to collect fees (cash, checks, and/or credit cards) via advanced registration or on-site at SBDC workshops/seminars.
2. All revenue collected from clients served by the SBDC is considered program income and as such, must be documented and reported as program income on quarterly invoices.
3. All expenditures from program income must further SBDC program objectives and be summarized in the Narrative Justification on the Program Income tab of the ACF.
4. Records must be maintained by the participating institution to substantiate program income receipts and expenditures. These records should be made available, as necessary, for review by State and Federal monitoring staff, authorized auditors, and Florida SBDC Network

State Director's Office personnel.

5. Participating institutions (SBDCs) that have subcontracting entities must submit Budget Recapitulation/Expenditure Reports for each subcontractor. Program income generated by subcontracting entities must be documented on their own expenditure report. Participating institutions are responsible for ensuring their subcontracting entities follow the program income policy.
6. All program income must be accounted for separately from other Lead Center resources. In addition, funds must be identifiable to the program year for which they were provided.
7. All expenditures from program income funds must be allowable in accordance with the same terms as the agreement funds.
8. Per the Terms and Conditions of the SBA grant, "The recipient may not use Program Income to match the federal dollars provided or in place of funds already budgeted in the Cooperative Agreement".
9. It is recommended that program income be expended at about the same rate as generated. Program income, in any amount, can be carried forward into the next budget period. OMB Circulars authorize recipients to retain program income throughout the project period so long as the funds are used to further program objectives. The project period is the entire time an SBDC is in the SBDC Program.
10. Participating host institutions are not allowed to charge a fee for processing program income for the SBDC.
11. If an SBDC leaves the Florida SBDC Network, all of the remaining balance in the program income account must be returned to the State Director's Office where it will be used to further SBDC program objectives.
13. SBDCs must expend any program income exceeding 25 percent of the SBDC's total budget (SBA Federal funds and matching funds) annually.
14. Expected Program Income revenue and expenditures should be reported on the annual application for continuation of funding. Actual revenue and expenditures should be reported on the quarterly invoices.

### ***Application for Continuation of Funding (ACF)***

Each year the State Office solicits proposals for the coming year through the Application for Continuation of Funding. The ACF is an invitation for continued participation to entities that are current recipients of subcontract agreements for programs administered by the Florida SBDC Network State Office at the University of West Florida. The ACF is part of the Florida SBDC Network's annual and continuous planning process. The ACF compliments and aligns with the organization's other key documents, but most importantly, with the Florida SBDC Network Strategic Plan.

Upon approval, each regional center host partner enters into a new subcontract agreement with the State Office. The ACF award amount should not exceed the funding level as advised by the Florida SBDC Network State Office.

All proposed costs reflected in the budget must be necessary to the project, reasonable and otherwise allowable under applicable federal cost principles and network policies. For a detailed description of these costs refer to 2 CFR 220 under the section noted in "CFR Reference."

**Once the annual SBA Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is released, regions will have four weeks to complete the ACF.**

## ***Allowable Costs***

For a cost to be allowable it must meet criteria of being reasonable, allocable and consistently treated and conform to any limitations or exclusions set forth in the 2 CFR § 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (aka "Uniform Guidance") and/or subcontract agreement.

Following is a 'short list' of allowable and unallowable costs sponsored by the Florida SBDC Network. For a detailed description of these costs refer to 2 CFR 220 under the section noted in "CFR Reference" and the ACF instructions.

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<b>Section</b>	<b>Type of Cost</b>	<b>Allowable or Unallowable as a Direct Cost</b>
421	Advertising & Public Relations	<p>Allowable only if related to and necessary for performance of the sponsored project (i.e., recruitment of personnel, procurement of goods and services etc.).</p> <p>Unallowable for advertising related to the general image of the university or events related to instruction, other institutional activities, or demonstrations. Unallowable for promotional items and memorabilia, including models, gifts and souvenirs</p>
423	Alcohol	Unallowable
Apx. III, B6(1)(2)	Communication Costs	Allowable only for costs directly attributable to a specific funded project, e.g. recurring line charges, network charges, telephone costs, or other general/generic communication expenses.
430	Compensation for Personal Services	<p>Salaries, wages and fringe benefits of personnel who directly contribute to the project's technical purpose (i.e. service delivery consultants, center directors, and support staff)</p> <p>Unallowable for salaries &amp; wages of administrator (i.e. president, vice president, deans) personnel.</p>
434	Contributions & Donations	Unallowable
438	Entertainment Costs	Unallowable
439	Equipment & other Capital Expenditures	<p>Allowable only for special purpose equipment – used exclusively and directly attributed to the specific sponsored project. Prior approval required for items with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more.</p> <p>Unallowable for General Purpose Equipment.</p>
441	Fines & Penalties	Unallowable
445	Goods or Services for Personal Use	Unallowable
Apx. III, B5	Housing & Personal Living Expenses	Unallowable
447	Insurance & Indemnification	Allowable if related to and necessary for the performance of the sponsored project.



		Refer to the code for allowability of other types of insurance maintained by the institution in connection with the general conduct of its activities.
450	Most Lobbying Costs	Unallowable
451	Losses on Other Sponsored Agreements or Contracts	Unallowable
452	Maintenance & Repair Costs	Allowable as a direct cost as necessary to carry out the technical and scientific aspects of and actually used for the performance of a sponsored project.
453	Material & Supplies Costs	Allowable as a direct cost when necessary, and actually used for the performance of the sponsored project.
432	Conferences	<p>Allowable when the primary purpose is the dissemination of technical information directly related to the project.</p> <p>This includes costs of meals, transportation, rental of facilities, speakers' fees, and other items incidental to such meetings or conferences.</p> <p>"Entertainment costs" are unallowable (see above)</p>
454	Memberships, Subscriptions & Professional Activity Costs	Allowable as a direct cost for membership in business, technical and professional organizations AND costs of the institutions subscriptions to business, professional & technical periodicals directly attributable and in the name of a specific funded project (i.e. SBDC).
448	Patent Costs (Intellectual Property)	Allowable if required by the sponsored agreement.
459	Professional Services Costs	Allowable when in accordance with CFR 200, 200.435 and in compliance with university policy
460	Proposal Costs	Unallowable
461	Publication & Printing Costs	Allowable only for costs directly attributable to a specific funded project.
462	Rearrangement & Reconversion Costs	Unallowable for costs incurred for ordinary or normal rearrangement and alteration of facilities
463	Recruiting Costs	<p>Allowable when related to and necessary for the project and if reasonable (color ads are not considered reasonable)</p> <p>Advertising which includes color, material for other than recruitment purposes, or which is excessive in size is unallowable</p>

## ***Internal Controls***

All subcontracted host partners must have processes and systems designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of objectives in the following categories:

- A. effectiveness and efficiency of operations;
- B. reliability of reporting for internal and external use; and
- C. compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

## ***Prior Approvals***

### **Other Federal and State Grants and Contracts**

In general, an SBDC regional center may enter into contracts with Federal, State and local government departments or agencies to provide specific assistance to small business concerns. **However, host partners who intend to utilize the SBDC regional center, i.e. SBDC resources or brand in the delivery of the requirements of the contract shall secure prior approval of the State Director of the Florida SBDC Network.** Prior approval request must outline the subject and general scope of the requirements of the contract opportunity.<sup>1</sup> If necessary, the State Director shall secure prior approval(s) from appropriate authority(ies). Each approval shall be based upon a determination that the grant or contract opportunity will provide assistance to small business concerns and that performance of the contract will not hinder the SBDC regional center in carrying out the terms of the sub-agreement. Furthermore, any State Director approved grants and contracts will be evaluated during the CIP as it relates to personnel time commitments and performance measures.

### **Travel**

**In-State:** In-state travel does not require approval from the State Office with the exception of conference travel, which should be included on the ACF. Regional Centers have autonomy to travel to events outside of their designated service area that support regional missions and are not duplicative of the efforts of the State Office.

**Out of State:** All out of state travel for all program personnel, including subcontractors, requires prior approval from the State Director. All out of state travel to conferences should be included on the ACF.

**International:** All international travel for all program personnel, including subcontractors, requires prior approval from **BOTH** the State Director and the SBA. The only exception is international travel that is being conducted using Host Institution funds, not those allocated from the University of West Florida's state or federal allocations for SBDC or APEX Accelerator programing.

Individuals traveling internationally and needing access to SBDC owned devices and/or data must submit a request for approval in writing to the State Office a minimum of 30 days prior to departure.

***All travel requests must be submitted for consideration to the State Director of the Florida SBDC Network, or his/her delegate, no less than:***

- 30 days for out-of-state travel
- 45 days for out-of-country travel

***To be considered for approval, all travel must:***

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<sup>1</sup>15 U.S. Code § 648(a)(5)

1. be in compliance with OMB Uniform Guidance 2 C.F.R. § 200.474 and 13 C.F.R. Part 130.460(g);
2. be only for the period of official business and reasonable for the purpose and duration of necessary travel;
3. be determined and adhere to the requirements of the host institutions travel cost principles and policies;
4. be performed in accordance with the provisions and purposes stated in the subcontract agreement, and
5. support the network's accomplishment of its strategic and performance objectives.

***Travel request must be appropriately itemized and justified on the approved Travel Authorization Form, including but not limited to:***

1. name and position of traveler(s)
2. name or event and travel destination,
3. purpose for travel and how it supports the objectives of the network,
4. mode of transportation to be used,
5. estimated itemized cost of the trip, and
6. if appropriate, the agenda or link to the agenda of the event.

The Florida SBDC Travel Authorization Form must be signed by the SBDC Service Center Director, and, for all out-of-state and out-of-country requests, the supervisor of the Service Center Director prior to submission. Supervisor approval may be provided by email if it specifies the event, named traveler(s), and approval of the traveler(s) to attend the event for official business.

Authorization for all travel requests is at the discretion of the State Director of the Florida SBDC Network, or his/her delegate, and, when necessary, the funding agency. Failure to obtain prior approval shall be considered a violation of the subcontract agreement and may result in suspension or termination of award funding.

### **Equipment Purchases**

Equipment includes items costing at least \$5,000 and useful life of more than one year. Host partners shall secure prior approval before purchasing equipment with program funding, including program income. The SBDC must maintain an inventory of equipment purchased with program dollars, including cost, location and detailed description of each item. An Equipment inventory will be conducted as part of the CIP process.

### ***Center locations***

Any Regional Center under subcontract with the Florida SBDC Network must provide the State Office with an accurate list of all Center locations. This list should encompass any location where the center has an agreement or MOU in place. Furthermore, these locations should be made publicly available on the Center's website and at a minimum display a phone number and physical address. Center locations will be discussed during the CIP review.

### ***Funding Terms***

In accordance with the terms of the subcontract agreement, allocation of funding resources to a regional center host partner institution may be reduced or canceled at the discretion of the Florida SBDC Network State Director without cause. For further information reference the Subcontract Terms and Conditions.

## **Funding Flex Provision**

In calculating annual funding awards during most years, the network shall apply a 3% maximum fluctuation cap in performance based funding to ensure a regional center does not experience inordinate increases or decreases in award funding without appropriate time and ability to address their own performance. This does not apply to years in which there is an increase or decrease in direct funding provided to the Network.

## **Required Reports**

All SBDC host partners must provide the required reports to the Florida SBDC State Office by the established deadlines and in the required format. Failure to file accurate and timely reports may result in withholding of reimbursements up to cancellation or non-renewal of a subcontract agreement.

### ***The required reports are:***

#### ***SBDC Semi-Annual and Annual Performance Reports –***

Semi-Annual and Annual Performance Reports must address the SBDC's progress towards meeting the major activities, objectives and performance goals in a brief narrative. It should also include a discussion of issues the SBDC believes may impair its ability to achieve these items by the end of the subcontract budget period accompanied with proposed actions for improvement. These Reports must include a summary of the activities, outputs, outcomes and achievements in the prescribed reporting categories with accompanying management analysis.

Semi-Annual and Annual Performance Reports must be submitted to the State Director, Director of Strategic Programs and Director of Finance in electronic format of the template provided, preferably MS Word, by the 15<sup>th</sup> calendar day following the end of the six month programmatic period. The requirement for programmatic reports is specified in the sub-contracts each year.

<b>Programmatic Reporting Period</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
January 1 - June 30	July 15th
July 1 - December 31	January 15th

#### ***SBDC Quarterly Financial Reports (Invoices) –***

Host partners must submit an authorized SBDC Financial Report (Invoice) signed by the Authorized Official and Authorized Representative of the organization. Failure to comply with this requirement in a timely manner can result in delayed processing of payment requests, including up to non-reimbursement. All financial reports must include the following items:

- Authorized Invoice Form
- Budget Reconciliation

## ***Unspent Federal and State Program Funds at Year End***

All federal and state funds are allocated with the expectation that they will be spent within the sub-contracted program year. Unspent state funds are rolled over into the State Office's carry forward

account. Carry forward funds are limited to non-recurring expenses. All Regions must report the amount of funds they do not plan to spend to the State Director and Director of Finance no later than 60 days from the program year closing so that the Finance Department can manage the budget in a way that limits the amount of funds being rolled over to carry forward.

## ***Closeout***

The Florida SBDC Network State Office, or subcontracted host partner may cancel the subcontract agreement at any time without cause upon thirty (30) days written notice to the other party. A close-out of a subcontract award will occur when:

- all applicable administrative actions and all required work of the subcontract award have been completed by the subcontracted host partner, or
- a 30-day notice is received in writing by either party (Florida SBDC Network State Office or subcontracted host partner) of the other parties intent to cancel the agreement, or
- the Florida SBDC Network State Office finds that there has been a failure by the subcontracted host partner to comply with the provisions of the subcontract agreement, including but not limited to making reasonable progress to achieve performance deliverables.

This section specifies the primary actions the Florida SBDC Network Headquarters and subcontracted host partner shall take to complete the close-out process.

### **Host Partner Close-Out Procedures**

Unless specified in writing, the subcontracted host partner must submit all financial, performance, and other reports as required by the terms and conditions of the subcontract agreement within 45 calendar days after the closure date to the State Office. This includes, but not limited to:

- liquidating all allowable and allocable obligations incurred under the award,
- inventorying all supplies and equipment, and
- capturing all performance activity and client engagements in the network's approved system.

Final financial, performance and other reports shall be submitted in the format prescribed by the Florida SBDC Network State Office.

Any program income balance, supplies and equipment (capital and non-capital) computers, computer accessories, cell phones, software, books, periodicals, unused supplies and materials (including marketing materials) purchased with program funds (award or matching funds) shall be transferred to the Florida SBDC Network State Office upon submission of final reports.

Any dedicated telephone number shall remain active for a minimum of 45 days after the closure date with a recording referring existing and prospective customers to other service center locations.

If it exists, any dedicated website, web page or social media shall remain active for a period of 45 days after the closure date providing public notice of the center's closure and link(s) to other service center locations. After 45-days, the website, web page and/or social media shall be deactivated and the use of all SBDC signage, stationery, email, voicemail, printed materials, center products (especially seminar curriculum) and advertisements must be ceased.

When requested in writing by the subcontracted host partner, the Florida SBDC Network SO may grant extensions.

## **State Office Close-Out Procedures**

The Florida SBDC Network SO shall:

- establish a plan for the continuation of services to small business concerns in the market of the center being closed.
- prepare and send official closure notifications and instructions to all existing small business clients.
- provide written content for all websites, web pages and/or social media accountants.
- Upon receipt, review and satisfaction of its final reports and obligations, make prompt payment to the subcontracted host partner for allocable and allowable reimbursable costs in accordance with the subcontract agreement.

## **Asset Protection**

- Annually, the Regional Director or their designated surrogate shall conduct an inventory audit of all equipment purchased with grant funds.
- Quarterly, the Regional Director or their designated surrogate shall conduct audits of all equipment with electronic data storage and all equipment that has been used to access Florida SBDC Network data sources and/or software. Lost or stolen devices meeting these specifications shall be reported immediately to the State Office's IT Manager. Documentation of these efforts will be provided to the State Office during the annual in-person CIP review.
- All electronic media and data storage utilized by FSBDCN personnel must be sanitized according to the U.S. NIST SP 800-88 standards or destroyed in a manner that renders the data unreadable when it is no longer in use.

## **Policy Title: Florida SBDC Network Strategic Planning Process**

**Responsible Department:** Florida SBDC State Director

**Revision date:** February 31, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the strategic planning process for the Florida SBDC Network

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC State Office and Regional Leadership

### **Policy Statement:**

The state office is charged with setting strategic direction for the Florida SBDC Network. The network has adopted a six pillars strategic plan structure that focuses on People, Product, Process, Performance, Progress, and perception. The strategic plan time horizon should be three to five years and is strongly suggested that it be three years maximum.

### ***Defining The Foundational Time Bound Strategic Plan***

The State Office will conduct a strategic planning session with leadership to set the strategic direction for the Florida SBDC Network. The plan should be a minimum time horizon of three years with a maximum of five. The state office will engage a third party facilitator to moderate the session to ensure timely execution and all participants are heard.

### ***Review of Six Pillars***

The leadership team will review the six pillars of the strategic plan template and evaluate the pillar categories: People, Product, Process, Performance, Progress, and Perception.

### ***Broad Scope and Implementation***

The strategic plan will intentionally have a broad scope to accommodate the diversity of the state. Regional centers will have the flexibility to tailor their plans to fit within the statewide plan.

### ***Regional Planning Sessions***

Regional staff members will review the strategic objectives and conduct planning sessions to align their strategies with the statewide plan. They will have the autonomy to prioritize objectives based on the unique needs of their communities.

### ***Common Metrics***

The State Office, in collaboration with regional leadership, will define common leading measures for each pillar to measure statewide impact. These metrics will go beyond standard SBA and State KPIs.

### ***Annual Review Meetings***

Leadership will meet annually in person to review the strategic plan and the agreed-upon statewide leading measures. This ensures alignment and progress towards meeting strategic objectives.

### ***Communication and Education***

The statewide strategic plan and objectives will be communicated through various channels such as Knowledge Exchange webinars, newsletters, town halls, and the statewide professional development conference. This will educate the network on the importance of the strategy and its implementation.

This procedure emphasizes strong collaboration between the State Office and regional centers, flexibility in goal prioritization, and effective communication to ensure understanding and alignment across the network.

Draft



## **Policy Title: Guidelines for Reporting Program Service Activity and Data**

**Responsible Department:** Director of Strategic Programs

**Revision Date:** February 23,, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outline procedures for developing and maintaining client records in Salesforce and training event records in Blackthorn

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** All Florida SBDC staff

**Policy Statement:**

All SBDC's are required to report program service activity and data through the Florida SBDC Network authorized client relationship management (CRM) system. Access to the CRM system is limited to authorized users who have been adequately trained.

### ***Request for Services (SBA Form 641)***

Each client is required to sign a "Request for Services," (RFC or eRFC), commonly referred to as SBA Form 641, prior to the engagement of consulting services. In addition to collecting necessary information on the client and their business or pre-venture, the RFC acts as a waiver of liability for the Network, its partners, and FSBDCN personnel. If the client is an existing business, an authorized representative of the business must sign the form. In the case of a prospective business, the individual(s) receiving the consulting must sign the form. A copy of all wet-signed forms shall be retained within the CRM as a file attachment on an eRFC record. If the client is a minor (under age 18), all forms must be signed by a parent or legal guardian.

A Request for Services (SBA Form 641) is required to be signed only at the time of initial engagement unless a new form is issued. However, SBDCs are encouraged to re-execute a new RFC if it has been longer than one year since a consultant last had a consulting session with the client. A new RFC should be collected after five years of working with a client or if Form 641 has been updated by the SBA.

### **Intake**

Once a client submits an eRFC, centers should assign a consultant within 2 business days. The consultant should then initiate the first contact with the client within 3 business days. This process will be reviewed and discussed during the CIP review.

### **APEX**

Clients interested in the APEX program must complete additional filtering questions in order to determine eligibility. A complete list of questions can be found in the **APEX section**.

### ***Consulting Hours***

Consulting includes all time spent directly engaging with or for the benefit of a qualified client. Double counting of consulting hours is not allowed.

## **Contact**

Contact hours is time spent in direct interaction with the client, including face-to-face, telephone, or electronic interaction, such as emails directly related to consulting or videoconferencing.

## **Prep**

Prep time is all time spent preparing for a client contact engagement. Prep time includes, but not limited to, such activities as researching and creating reports or report support documents (e.g. feasibility analysis, proformas or loan package services), review of relevant correspondence, and other research related to the consulting engagement.

Prep time claimed must be reasonable in relation to consulting time reported and must be supported in the client's record and session records by results achieved and documents generated.

## **Travel Time**

Travel time for the purpose of delivering consulting services may be captured for reporting purposes but does not count as consulting time or contribute toward meeting performance deliverables.

## ***Consulting Session Records***

Consulting session records are documented evidence of assistance provided by an SBDC on behalf of a qualified client. The session record evidences the investment of the assistance provided by capturing key details of each engagement prescribed by professional standards. Aggregate evidence and data is provided to funding stakeholders to justify support for program services.

## **Key Session Fields**

***The following highlight key fields and policies with respect to every consulting session record.***

***Date*** – Enter the date that the work was completed (prep) or engagement took place (contact). Consulting sessions must be recorded at the conclusion of each session to ensure accuracy and completeness of work performed.

***Program*** – Default should be “SBDC.” Do not change unless you are entering a session under a specific program or project which you have been provided with permission. It is important to only use the Program ID from which your salary is paid in full, or partially.

***Sub-Program*** – If there is a specific initiative or special program or project associated with the consulting session, the appropriate Sub-Program ID should also be used. Sub-programs may include regional initiatives or stakeholders, or other initiatives that need to be tracked at the state level, such as disaster assistance. This allows for accuracy of reporting for specific activity/project related assistance.

***Area*** – Select from the drop down box the appropriate session category that represents the principal subject of the consulting session. This is the area of consulting that signified the primary subject with respect to time. Refer to “Consulting Services” above for the major category definitions. Do NOT use categories above 1000 unless provided specific permission. Every session must be categorized with a primary area of consulting.

***Contact Type*** – Select from the drop down box the appropriate place or forum used to conduct the session. Contact Type = Review/Research is appropriate for when a staff member is recording only research activities in support of client assistance and there is no contact time to record.

**Contact** – Amount of time in direct interaction with the client, including face-to-face, telephone, or electronic interaction, such as email or videoconferencing. Email should only be recorded as Contact time if it is in support of the consulting effort. Emails coordinating an appointment time should be tracked as non-consulting/administrative. Contact time should be recorded rounded up to the nearest quarter-hour, i.e. each 15 minutes' equals .25 hours.

**Prep** – Amount of time spent preparing for a client contact engagement. Prep time includes, but not limited to such activities as researching and creating reports or report support documents (e.g. feasibility analysis, proformas or loan package services), review of relevant correspondence, and other research related to the consulting engagement. Contact time should be recorded rounded up to the nearest quarter-hour, i.e. each 15 minutes' equals .25 hours.

**On the Date of the Session** – Verify all fields to reflect changes since the last session.

**Verify:**

- *Status* (i.e. change from “Not Yet In Business” to “In Business”),
- *Employment* (i.e. number of full time and part time employed), and
- *Annual Sales and Annual Profit and Loss*.

If the company exports, check the “Exporting” checkbox and verify changes since the last session in *Export Employees* (i.e. number of total employees dedicated to export activities) and *Export Sales* (i.e. amount of total Sales from outside U.S. markets).

**Notes** – See subsection “Session Notes” below.

**Reportable Impact** – See section “L. Reportable Impact.”

## **Session Notes**

Session records should be of sufficient detail to justify the amount of time reported and assistance provided. Unless otherwise noted, each consulting session narrative should include at least the following:

- A summary of the business and business owners (new/initial session only)
- An analysis of the client’s problem or opportunity.
- A summary of the consultant’s observations, work and recommendations.
- Follow-up required by the consultant and client.
- Documentation generated to support the consulting time claimed, i.e. research reports, plans created, etc.

Session records must meet professional standards and provide sufficient detail that another consultant unfamiliar with the client or engagement can review and intimately understand what consulting occurred and be able to continue the client relationship with minimal disruption. Further, the narrative should justify the level of service (hours) delivered and the category that the session was classified.

The session must be marked as “Completed” once all necessary information is recorded.

For further information and examples of best practices consult the **Salesforce User Manual**.

## **Hour Disallowance**

In accordance with standards for high performance and quality of service, each regional center is expected to have an ongoing, regular process for reviewing consulting session records to ensure compliance with the above standards and delivery of high quality services. Regional Directors are

responsible for ensuring all personnel, including subcontractors understand and adhere to the standards included in this section. In addition, the State Office deploys processes during CIP reviews and periodically throughout the program year to test for compliance and quality. Consulting discovered to not meet network standards may result in the disallowance of consulting hours reported, up to the loss of program funding for hours disallowed.

Where there are 100 or more consulting hours reported for a client, there is a note highlighted on the business record. This makes it clear to check for justification of that many hours (e.g. student teams, long standing clients).

### ***Non-Consulting Activity***

For all other activities that do not meet the above definitions of consulting activity, that time and activity detail can be tracked as a Non-Consulting Activity in the CRM (in accordance with Regional Center requirements and direction). Refer to the Salesforce User Manual for further guidance and examples.

### ***Reportable Impact***

The Government Performance Results Act mandates that the SBA and its resource partners, including SBDCs, be accountable and “outcome-driven” if they expect to receive continued Congressional and taxpayer support. The Florida SBDC Network takes this commitment to being good stewards of both Federal and State taxpayer dollars seriously. As such, it is imperative that all SBDCs take measures to ensure all reportable impact is verified. See the “Performance” section of this document and the Salesforce User Guide for more detailed information on how to submit, verify and report impact.

### **Reporting System**

The Florida SBDC utilizes Salesforce as its Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Salesforce houses the network’s intellectual knowledge with respect to customer engagement, including the business outcomes that occur as a result of program services.

Salesforce is accessible with a unique username and password by active FSBDC personnel only. Given the proprietary and confidential nature of the information captured in Salesforce, all staff are expected to protect and periodically change their password. Use of the CRM requires use of Multi-Factor Authentication which is primarily provided via the free Salesforce Authenticator app available on Android or iOS devices. Users are strictly prohibited from providing their login credentials to any other individual or logging into the system on behalf of any other individual. User accounts with no login activity for thirty (30) days will have their login permissions revoked. A new request for access will be required to reinstate such user accounts. Further, all FSBDC personnel are required to complete system training and acknowledge their understanding of the Florida SBDC Network’s Code of Professional Conduct and sign the Florida SBDC Network Conflict of Interest and Ethics Policy (aka Conflict of Interest) form annually.

Access and compliance with these professional standards are monitored by the Network’s State Office.

### **Recognized Impact**

***To be considered reportable impact the following must occur:***

1. The client must have received **SUBSTANTIVE CONSULTING** from the SBDC in an area aligning with the desired reportable outcome, and

2. The Client must verify that the reported impact was attributed to the consulting services delivered by the SBDC, and
3. The reported impact must be documented and verified in accordance with network standards outlined below.

### **Impact Verification and Attribution**

All Reportable Impact must be verified and attributed by the client before being reported in the CRM. While attribution can only occur by client testimonial, i.e. the client indicated that the business outcome occurred, in part or in whole, as a result of the assistance received, substantiated verification can be obtained using any of the following three methods:

1. Letter or Email received by the client specifically outlining the business outcome and its attribution to the services received,
2. Completed and signed Client Impact Attribution Form, or
3. Response to the Florida SBDC Annual Customer Survey.

***It is imperative that impact is collected throughout the year to ensure more accurate data and reporting. As such, Centers should implement all of these to ensure the collection of services impact.***

***Email or Impact Attribution Form*** – To meet the standard, the customer email or ***Impact Attribution Form*** must meet both the Verification Test and Attribution Test:

***1. Verification Test –***

The email or ***Impact Attribution Form*** must specifically identify the impact or outcome that occurred (e.g. started new business, hired three new employees, received \$1M loan), and

***2. Attribution Test –***

The customer must specifically state in the email or that the outcome occurred as a result of the SBDC services received.

Impact that is verbalized or otherwise discovered through other verification (e.g. news stories, third-party sources) alone does not constitute a reportable impact due to the lack of attribution. However, the Center may use such information to follow-up with the client to discover if the impact was attributed to the services received.

***Client Impact Attribution Form*** – Centers may use equivalent forms that include all fields and statements included on the state authorized form. The authorized form may be found on the Florida SBDC Intranet.

***Annual Customer Survey*** – Each center should implement practices that convey the importance of the network's annual survey with every customer during and throughout the consulting engagement. Further, each center should implement survey notification processes and practices to obtain the highest degree of returned surveys possible.

### **Capturing Impact**

***Eligible and recognizable reportable impact shall be captured in the CRM one of two ways:***

- A. Reportable impact discovered as part of a qualified consulting session engagement.
- B. Reportable impact discovered outside of the consulting engagement, e.g. survey response.

Sessions with reportable impact must be linked to the client milestone that is created and the milestone must also have a link back to the session.

Refer to the Salesforce User Guide for further information on properly documenting impact in the CRM.

## **New Business Start**

The number of new businesses started in a given federal fiscal year.

In itself, a change in business status of a client during the consulting relationship is not a reportable New Business Start. To be recognized as reportable impact as a New Business Start, all of the following must be true:

- The client did not meet the definition of "In Business" prior to receiving SBDC consulting services.
- The client received substantive consulting from the SBDC in an area aligning with the desired reportable outcome, e.g. the client started a business evidenced by substantive consulting hours in the area of Start-Up Assistance .
- The client achieved one of the four tests (milestones) to be defined as "In Business" after receiving substantive SBDC consulting.
- The New Business Start is verified and attributed by the client in accordance with network standards. (see Impact Verification and Attribution)

Per section 8.1.9.1 Reporting New Business Starts of the NOFO, *there will be a new field added to NEXUS to indicate that the business is a New Business Start. This is based on milestones as reported by the SBDC Network and, for which client attribution has been obtained.*

# Is it a new business start?

## BOX 1

Client has obtained one or more:

- Business license
- Articles of incorporation
- EIN
- DBPR License
- Other state required license



## BOX 2

Client did one of the following:

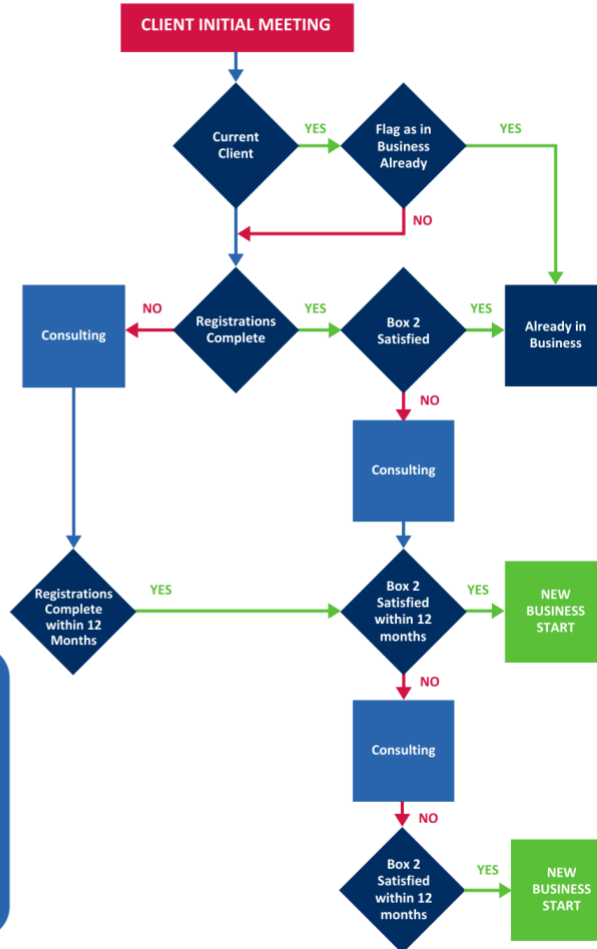
- Made a sale for profit
- Hired employees or contractors
- Acquired Capital
- Incurred business expense for operations



## BOX 3

New Business Start may be counted if ALL of the below are accurate:

- Client has received a minimum of 1 hour of consulting
- Both of the boxes must be satisfied and at least one of the actions must be because of SBDC assistance
- Client provides timely attribution
- The substantive action must have happened within a 12 month period after the consulting session
- The consultant updates the business account to reflect the client's "in-business" status



State Designated as Florida's Principal Provider of Business Assistance [288.001, Fla. Stat.]

The Florida SBDC Network is a statewide partnership program nationally accredited by the Association of America's SBDCs and funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Department of Defense, State of Florida, and other private and public partners, with the University of West Florida serving as the network's headquarters. Florida SBDC services are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis. Language assistance services are available for individuals with limited English proficiency.

## **Capital Accessed**

All forms of debt and equity investment obtained by clients from all sources attributed to SBDC assistance.

**Loans** – All personal, commercial and government guaranteed and direct debt instruments obtained for the purpose of business investment. Loans may include but are not limited to consumer and personal debt products used specifically for business purposes, such as personal loans from friends and family, commercial loans and lines of credit, and SBA, USDA and Florida Disaster loans. Credit lines and other revolving debt instruments are recognized for the full amount when established and not to be based on individual draw-downs.

**Financial** – All equity capital obtained for the purpose of business investment, including but not limited to owner direct investment from cash equivalents (e.g. savings and retirement accounts), crowdfunding, angel and venture capital investment, stock offering, or grants (e.g. SBIR/STTR grants).

Factoring, also referred to as accounts receivable financing, is a transaction in which a business sells its accounts receivable to a third party commercial financial company, e.g. factoring finance company or debt collector. The sale of the receivable is at a set fraction of what original sale amount. While referred to as a financing option, factoring is not, from our perspective, financing but rather a recognition of revenue already earned, e.g. sales revenue. Therefore, we do not recognize factoring as a capital access reportable impact.

**Capital Infusion** – Capital infusion includes all forms of debt and investments from all sources (i.e., lines of credit, consumer debt products used specifically for the business, angel investors, owner’s capital contributions, etc.). Credit lines and other revolving debt facilities/instruments are to be recognized for the full amount of the line of credit when established and not to be based on individual draw-downs.

The sale of a business should not be documented as ‘Other Capital’ under Reportable Impact as it does not meet the definition of capital infusion.

### ***To be recognized as Reportable Impact as Capital Accessed, both of the following must be true:***

- The client must have received substantive consulting from the SBDC in an area aligning with the desired reportable outcome, e.g. the clients \$1m owner investment is evidenced by substantive consulting hours in the area of Capital Access Assistance , and
- The owner's investment must be verified and attributed by the client in accordance with network standards.

Under the “Other Capital” section, in the “Miscellaneous Capital Type” category, there is a selection for “Purchase of Business” and “Sale of Business.” Clients who sell their business should have their “Business Status” changed from “In Business” to “Sold Business,” from the “Business Characteristics” section.

## **Contracts**

Reportable impact for Government Contracts (DoD Prime, DoD Sub, Federal Prime, Federal Sub, State Prime, State Sub, Local Prime, Local Sub) should also have the appropriate attribution and verification. Subcontract means a contract entered into by a subcontractor for performance on a prime contract or a higher tier contact.



Contracts should only be reported where funds by the government entity have been obligated. You must not report a potential maximum contract value over multiple years that is not actually obligated, or an estimated value of orders that may be placed under a contract at the future date.

Impact from award of SBIR or STTR contracts should be reported as impact against the appropriate DoD or Federal agency “Reportable Impact” field. SBIR or STTR grants should be reported under “Other Capital” “Grant”.

## ***Training Event Records***

All training events are expected to be entered into the CRM. Accurate data entry is paramount for internal goal tracking and reporting to the Small Business Administration; Department of Defense Office of Small Business Programs; and other stakeholders.

CRM Events records must include:

- A clear and appropriate event name
- The region holding the event
- A program (SBDC, APEX, etc.)
- Training Topic
- Event start date and time
- Counts for attendees and no-shows, either individually or by aggregate demographically

The Event record’s Status field must be marked as “Completed” in order to be counted for metrics and reporting purposes. When tracking attendees individually, Attendance Status must be marked as “Attended” for an Attendee record to be counted towards any metrics or goals.

All events that are for public registration are also expected to be entered into the CRM with sufficient time to advertise said events and to ensure a sufficient training class size. Events that are not exclusive (i.e. trainings only open to attendees that have taken previous courses), shall be listed on the Florida SBDC Master Training Calendar located at <https://floridasbdc.org/services/training/live-training-calendar/>

For further information and examples of best practices consult the **Salesforce User Manual**.

## ***Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction Survey Program***

The Florida SBDC is required by our federal funding partners to gauge customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction in order to continuously improve processes and products. Furthermore, to satisfy the network’s ASBDC Accreditation this feedback must be collected in a manner that is actionable, timely, and consistent across the network. Results are reviewed regularly as part of the CIP process. The table below outlines the various formal mechanisms the network utilizes to collect customer feedback.



	Initial Session Survey	APEX Quarterly Survey	Annual Survey	Event Feedback Survey	Mid-year Impact Survey	Long term clients - Satisfaction Survey
Who sends?	State Office	State Office	State Office	Regions	Regions, may request support from State Office	State Office
Program	SBDC	APEX	SBDC + APEX	SBDC + APEX	SBDC + APEX	SBDC
Population	Any client recorded with their first session, completed with at least .5 contact hours	Any client recorded with an APEX session the last quarter	Two years of clients with sessions aligned with federal fiscal year	Event attendees	Clients consulted within the past year typically, region's discretion	A random sample of clients with at least 5 hours recorded
Timing of Distribution	Day after session marked as completed or entered, automatically triggered	After EDMIS lock for the quarter	Distribute in January	Can schedule email surveys to distribute as events end, within an hour, the next day, etc	Regional discretion	Sample timing built on a session period, e.g. a random day or a week within a period; done at least quarterly (in discussion with team)
Launch date	January 2024	October 2023	A continuation of ongoing practice - next launch January 2024	January 2024	July 2024	March 2024
Survey mechanism	Salesforce Surveys	Salesforce Surveys	Qualtrics (at this time) due to the volume of emails - use of Zapier integration and/or data uploaded to upload to SF	Blackthorn	Currently disparate systems, but we recommend Salesforce surveys so that your reportable impacts can be automatically generated by the survey mechanism	Salesforce Surveys
Tools to use for continuous improvement	Initial Session Results Dashboard, linked to the consultant, region, and client	APEX Quarterly Survey dashboard	Qualtrics password-protected reports so that RDs may monitor data as it comes in through the multi-week survey process; spreadsheets distributed upon close	One standardized training form; Add event satisfaction survey responses to the events dashboard	Depends on mechanism, similar tools provided if done in Qualtrics of SF with State Office assistance	Long Term Clients Satisfaction Dashboard, linked to the lead consultant, region, and client
Opt-in or requirement?	Required	Required	Required	Required	Opt-in	Required

Typically, most complaints are received in writing as part of the response to the network's annual survey. The network strives to get feedback on the annual survey in a timely manner. It is the State Office's objective to supply the ASBDC the Annual Survey results as quickly as possible, but we cannot sacrifice the process or quality of the results to meet a deadline that the Florida SBDC Network has no control over.

Once the survey window closes, results are analyzed by the State Office and results are distributed to the regional centers. Regional Directors should review and investigate any complaints determined to be of a serious nature and follow up with the customer as appropriate. A record of the follow up should be recorded as a miscellaneous session in Salesforce.

Collectively, the data and results from its formal and informal assessments are used by network leadership to 1) define FSBDC target markets and services, and 2) design organizational goals, objectives and strategies in its Strategic Planning Process. The FSBDC conducts formal assessments that measure customer satisfaction through an initial session survey and the annual survey. The annual survey asks all five key questions below, while the initial session only asks the first two:

- Overall, how satisfied were you with the services received?
- Would you recommend the FSBDC to another business owner?
- Overall, was the service you received beneficial?
- How do you rate the knowledge and expertise of your consultant?
- How do you rate your working relationship with your consultant?

The network establishes strategic goals for each measure and benchmarks those results against national averages.

## **Policy Title: Change in Funding Usage Request**

**Responsible Department: State Director, Director of Finance**

**Revision Date: February 23, 2024**

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines procedures for requesting usage of program funds for non-service activities that were not originally anticipated in the ACF

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Regional Directors and Budget Managers

### **Policy Statement:**

The Application for Continued Funding (ACF) is the primary mechanism for requesting program funds. Any and all anticipated budgetary items for the term of the contract should be requested at this time for approval by the State Office and SBA. However, the State Office recognizes that there will be extenuating circumstances where original budget funding may need to be shifted for a special project. As a best practice, the request should be made by the Regional Director to the State Director and Director of Finance with a minimum of 60 days notice. The following information should be included when making the request:

- Does the cost meet the micro-threshold limits per Memo 18-18. The current threshold is \$10,000.00?
- Will the project deviation be more than 10% of the total budget?
- Will the procurement go through the approved university purchasing process?
- What is the cost of the project?
- What portion of the expense is from program funds?
- Describe the project and how it will support the SBDC mission in 500 words or less.
- Anticipated start date
- Anticipated completion date
- Provide all relevant quotes
- Provide all relevant photos of the area being remodeled or upgraded
- If only a portion of the SBDC funds will be utilized for the area in consideration the cost must be broken out in the quotes and documentation from the contractor chosen.

If approved by the State Director and Director of Finance, the State Office will then make the request to the SBA Program Manager. Approval from the State Office does not guarantee approval from SBA.

## **Policy Title: Disaster Planning Operations**

**Responsible Department: Director of Business Continuity, Director of Strategic Communications**

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines expectations for Network emergency communications and operations

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** All Network Staff

**Policy Statement:**

### ***Emergency Communications***

All employees of the Florida SBDC Network are required to provide an alternative, non-work point of contact, phone and email address as part of their intranet profile. Personal contact information shall be reviewed for accuracy and currency and certified annually. This information will be used only in the event of an emergency or business disruption. All personal contact information is considered confidential and must not be shared, distributed or posted publicly.

In the event of a disruption or change to normal operations, SBDCs are required to communicate the status of this situation to the State Director of the Florida SBDC Network as soon as practical and possible.

In the event of a disruption to the normal operations of the State Office, or an operating disruption that is determined to be substantial, the State Director, or designee, will inform the status of the situation as soon as practical and possible to:

- The President of UWF,
- the Associate Administrator, Program Manager and Project Officer at the U.S. SBA Office of Small Business Development Centers,
- the DD and DDDs at the Florida North and South SBA District Offices,
- the Network's Regional Centers .

### ***Disaster Operations Process***

Each Lead Center and its Service Centers must have in place disaster plans which are coordinated with the Host Institution to ensure delivery of services to small businesses in its area of operations. Such plans must be kept on file and available for review by SBA officials. Plans should be reviewed annually by the Lead and/or Service Center Directors and updated as needed. SBDCs individually, and in cooperation with SBA and other Federal Agencies as well as state and local entities, are encouraged to provide disaster recovery assistance to support impacted small businesses in local economies.

The State Office will closely monitor the State Emergency Operations Command Center activation levels. Information and status briefings will be communicated to and coordinated with the network through weather and emergency situation briefings and leadership calls with Regional Directors.

## ***Response and Recovery Outreach***

The safety of our staff and their families is our highest priority. All impacted network staff should first ensure the safety and security of their own families and personal belongings prior to providing outreach to clients.

**All official response and recovery outreach will be conducted in coordination with our state and federal partners, and with the direction and input of the State Office.** These efforts include staffing of Business Recovery Centers, deployment of the network's Mobile Assistance Centers and coordination of training and events with disaster recovery partners.

Draft

# **Policy Title: Approvals and Process for Additional Grant Funding, Earmarks, and Special Appropriations**

**Responsible Department: State Director**

**Revision Date: February 23, 2024**

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the requirements for applying for additional funding

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Regional Directors

**Policy Statement:**

The state office, as the lead center for the Florida SBDC Network, must have the authority to approve or deny an application for any additional funding that is not local in nature. The State Office encourages the regions to work with their local communities to expand the network services and offerings. This can be accomplished through direct grant funding or in-kind support. It is up to the regional leadership to form those relationships and to structure the agreements that best fit their requirements. The State Office leadership stands by to support the regions in achieving further funding locally.

The regional director and their associate director(s) are responsible for the performance of their region and the funds associated with the Florida SBDC and APEX Accelerator programs. Therefore, their full attention to the program is needed. Any further funding that originates from outside of the defined center's region must be approved by the State Office.

It is strictly prohibited for any regional center to apply for, advocate for, or obtain any state appropriation. The network is recognized in State Statute 288.001 as a state entity. Our key state stakeholders recognize that the entire network, and applying for any funds individually, will jeopardize the entire network and your peer centers.

All federal grant funds and earmarks must be approved by the State Director or his/her designee before any substantial conversations are held. The regional director shall request approvals from the state office at a minimum of 60 days in advance of any application being submitted. The request must, at a minimum, address the following items:

- Grantee (All parties applying)
- Grantor
- Length of funding?
- Amount of funding being requested?
- Is this funding one-time funding?
- Is the SBDC or APEX name being used to apply and how?
- Purpose of requesting funds?
- Will the funds support the mission of the SBDC or APEX programs?
- How much time will the grant require from the director or associate directors?
- Is your host institution aware of your intentions?
- Are your peer regions aware of your intentions at this time?
- Will this require the separation from current SBDC or APEX systems?
- Are any tools provided by the state office going to be utilized in support of the additional funding?



- Will our current CRM be utilized to support any portion of the program?
- Will existing staff be multitasked or will this require additional staff?
- Will the additional funding impact current KPI performance? If so, how?
- Deadline for decision

It is frowned upon for one region to apply for an earmark or federal grant and not as a united network. The network should operate as a cohesive network and the decisions to operate outside of the normal should be a network decision. It is understood by the state office that opportunities arise that are specific in nature to a region or a specific need for that region. It is not the intention of the State Office to hold back a region, but rather to ensure we have a strong unified network that will provide best in class service and brand.

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## **Strategic Planning Pillar: Performance**

### **Policy Title: Florida SBDC Network Resource Allocation and Performance**

#### **Measurement Guidelines**

**Responsible Department:** Florida SBDC State Director or Research & Data Analyst Director

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the process for allocating financial resources and assigning performance measurement goals to Florida SBDC Network Regional Centers

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC State Office and Regional Leadership, Budget Managers

**Policy Statement:**

#### ***Resource Allocation***

The Florida SBDC Network deploys its financial investments to ensure an ongoing effective organizational structure and administration that provides and facilitates service delivery throughout the state while achieving identified strategic objectives.

Performance is measured through stakeholder goals and allocations as a network and subdivided by the percentage of funding each center receives. The potential to lose funding or gain funding is determined by the center's performance to these metrics.

#### **State Office Funding**

The University of West Florida (UWF) is designated as the Recipient Organization for the Florida SBDC Network program funding. In accordance with federal and state statute, the recipient organization is the prime contractor and must establish and maintain a headquarters (commonly referred to as State Office or Lead Center) to provide administrative services to the SBDC network within the respective state. These administrative services shall include, but not be limited to, (1) program development; (2) program management; (3) promotion and public relations; (4) financial accounting; (5) reports management; and (6) internal quality control. Records shall be maintained in the network's headquarters including the federal, state, local government, academic and private sector resources available to the SBDC network and the types of services provided to clients.

Federal statute requires that the SBDC must have its own full-time staff, must have a separate budget and identity and, if part of a larger unit, must be a clearly distinguishable sub-unit. Staffing must include a full-time (100%) Network State Director, who will operate and administer the operations of the SBDC network and must have full authority to make expenditures under the Center's budget as well as to manage the program activities. At least 75% of the SBDC Network State Director's time must be dedicated to the functions of the SBA SBDC Cooperative Agreement. Other statutory requirements for the SBDC are outlined in 15 USC § 648 (c) (2).

The state office will hold a budget planning workshop annually to establish the working budget for the state office. All state office employees shall attend the workshop and provide input to establish budget category spending levels. The goal of the workshop is to provide input for the network to run effectively, continue to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars, maximize program service delivery, show value to our stakeholders, and provide advancements to the network.

The strategic plan will be utilized to help drive budget decisions. The state office will consider the network as a whole and areas of needed improvement and may direct, withhold or allocate additional funding as applicable for state office use to ensure the network meets stakeholder expectations.

State office staff will help provide input on strategic areas of emphasis and how this funding may be dispersed per region. It is the intent of the state office to establish a right sized budget to support our network. For transparency the state office allocation portion will be shared with our sub-contracted regions for awareness and an understanding of how regional budgets were established.

### **Regional Center Award Funding**

For purposes of resource allocation, “Award Funding” is the aggregate of federal and state funding received by the network's headquarters and subcontracted to a regional center host partner organization for the operation of an SBDC for a designated regional market area.

The Florida SBDC Network State Director deploys a mixed funding approach of base-level, performance, special incentive, and, when appropriate, expansion funding to ensure statewide service coverage and achievement of network strategic objectives and funding partner performance expectations. Funding allocation amounts and performance expectations for each region are established and communicated during the annual **Application for Continuation Funding (ACF)** proposal process preceding the next calendar year.

### **Base-Level Funding**

Each regional center host partner institution shall be provided base-level funding to ensure adequate ongoing operations to deliver core program services. Base-level funding criteria include:

- Population of the designated regional area served (60%)
- Geographic area of the designated regional area served (30%)
- Targeted business population of the market area served, i.e. number of businesses with fewer than 500 employees, including non-employers (10%)

These data are pulled together by counties served in each region using the most recent year available including:

- Population: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates, Census
- Geographic Area: Florida Association of Counties, <https://www.fl-counties.com/about-floridas-counties/county-population-general-information/>
- Business Population: U.S. Census Bureau / Non-Employer Statistics for All U.S. Firms by Industry, Veteran Status, and Gender for the U.S., States, Metro Areas, Counties, and Places; All Sectors: County Business Patterns, including ZIP Code Business Patterns, by Legal Form of Organization and Employment Size Class for the U.S., States, and Selected Geographies

The basis for base-level funding shall be determined each program year based on the award amount made available for that year by the network’s funding agencies. The source for the appropriation for base-level funding is the sum of SBA SBDC core program funding remaining after allocation of investment needed for State Office operations. Federal funds must be matched 100 percent, of which half must be cash and the remaining balance being in any combination of cash or in-kind (including waived indirect) contribution. No other federal award funding may qualify as match.

***State Funding: Performance-Based Funding***

In accordance with state statute, the Florida SBDC Network State Director shall establish 1) a "pay-per-performance incentive" model, and 2) strategic funding programs for regional centers to ensure that support services are available statewide; enhance program participation among state colleges and universities, and to implement best practices across the network.

Each regional center shall be provided performance funding based on the regional center’s achievement and contribution to network performance goals from the previous year. Funding performance goals are subject to change based on funding requirements.

The basis for performance funding shall be determined each program year based on the appropriation amount made available for that year. The source for the appropriation for performance funding is at least half of State funding appropriated by the Florida Legislature designated for core program services.

Score	Actual to Goal Performance:
1	Less than 30% of Goal
2	30% to 59% of Goal
3	60% to 89% of Goal
4	90% to 100% of Goal
5	101% + of Goal

Funding based on the performance model is based on each region’s actual performance on a metric compared to its target. Each core metric is graded using the five-point scale. Each region then has a performance index score calculated, which is a straight average of the performance score of all of the KPIs. In order to distribute performance funding, the total points achieved for all regions is summed. For example, if every region had the same average score of 4.5 the sum of all points scored would be 40.5. Each region would receive equal shares of performance funding, determined by the formula  $4.5/40.5 = 11.11\%$  ( regional score achieved/total average points achieved by all regions).

Any center falling below a 3.0 for their overall average KPI score will be flat level funded the following year. Any increase that should have been provided is otherwise encumbered and released once performance has improved. Any encumbered funds not allocated from an increase in performance will be dispersed as a one-time disbursement by February 1st to the other performing regions.

**State Funding: Strategic Incentive and Expansion Funding**

The basis for special incentive and expansion funding shall be determined each fiscal year based on the award amount made available for that fiscal year. Funding for special incentive and expansion shall be limited to a maximum of 49 percent of total State Performance Funding.

### ***Funding Performance Goals***

Each regional center shall be provided performance goals based on their allocation of State and SBA funding for the upcoming year. Performance Goals are specified in the sub-contracts each year. Performance goals are subject to change due to funding requirements. Regions should consult [tracking dashboards](#) on the CRM to monitor their progress to goals throughout the year. It is imperative that data is input throughout the year to reflect real time progress. Instructions for data input can be found on the CRM in the **Salesforce User Guide. [Insert Link Here.](#)**

# **Policy Title: Florida SBDC Network Continuous Improvement and Client Satisfaction Guidelines**

**Responsible Department:** Director of Strategic Programs

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2023

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the mechanisms utilized by the Florida SBDC Network to assess opportunities for continuous improvement and measure client satisfaction

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC State Office and Regional Leadership

**Policy Statement:**

## ***Continuous Improvement***

The Florida SBDC Network continuously strives for performance improvement and excellence. As part of our accountability to stakeholders, the Network goes through the America's SBDC Accreditation review every five years. In addition, the network receives annual SBA programmatic and financial reviews in order to maintain funding. These reviews include random samples of programmatic and financial data that can be requested at any time. As such, all centers should be prepared to provide this data in a timely manner, if requested.

Internally, the State Office will continually assess regional performance through quarterly Continuous Improvement Process (CIP) desk audits. In addition, each Regional Center will receive an in person CIP site visit every other year. During the in person CIP site visits, the State Office review team conducts meetings with the Regional Director, Regional Management (without the RD), Regional Consulting and Administrative personnel (without Regional leadership), and the Regional Director's direct supervisor (if available). If it is determined that a region's expected performance is lower than to be expected, the Florida SBDC Network State Office will place the Region on a Quality Improvement Plan. Regional center leadership shall submit a plan with specific, achievable, accountable and time bound actions to remedy the source of low performance. Where needed, and to the extent possible, additional support services or resources from the State Office will be allocated to aid in the success of the center. The State Director will notify the host partner that the regional center has been placed on a Quality Improvement Plan. Failure to demonstrate material improvement may result in reduction of funding up to the cancellation and rebid of the subcontract agreement.

CIP reviews include, but are not limited to, quantitative and qualitative assessment of various areas of performance and network procedures. A comprehensive CIP preparation guide is maintained on the Intranet.

## ***Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction***

The Florida SBDC is required by our federal funding partners to gauge customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction in order to continuously improve processes and products.

Collectively, the data and results from its formal and informal assessments are used by network leadership to 1) define FSBDC target markets and services, and 2) design organizational goals, objectives and strategies in its Strategic Planning Process. The FSBDC conducts formal assessments that measure customer satisfaction through an initial session survey and the annual survey. The annual survey asks all five key questions below, , while the initial session only asks the first two:

- Overall, how satisfied were you with the services received? (4.25 out of 5)
- Would you recommend the FSBDC to another business owner? (93% out of 100%)
- Overall, was the service you received beneficial? (93% out of 100%)
- How do you rate the knowledge and expertise of your consultant? (4.5 out of 5)
- How do you rate your working relationship with your consultant? (4.25 out of 5)

The network establishes strategic goals for each measure and benchmarks those results against national averages. These results are reviewed during the CIP process.

**Policy Title: Florida SBDC Network Strategic Plan Progress and Performance Measures**

**Responsible Department:** Florida SBDC Network Leadership

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2024

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy defines leading and lagging measures of the Network Strategic Plan

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC State Office and Regional Leadership, Budget Managers

**Policy Statement:**

Placeholder for metrics selected for Strategic Plan to meet accreditation condition



## **Strategic Planning Pillar: Progress - Position the Network to sustain current successes and create strategic growth opportunities**

### **Policy Title: Strategic Partnerships**

**Responsible Department:** Director of Strategic Partnerships

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2024

- I. Policy/Purpose:** This section highlights the various strategies utilized to advance the mission of the network
- II. Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Regional leadership
- III. Policy Statement:**

Internal and external partnerships are crucial to the overall success of the Florida SBDC Network. Regional Centers align their strategic objectives and key services to meet the needs and expectations of their key stakeholders and partner support organizations. These partnerships provide an opportunity to leverage the limited resources of both the FSBDC and other organizations to create the most return on investment for all parties involved. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) are utilized to formalize strategic partnerships with key stakeholders. The State Office is responsible for formalizing partnerships with other statewide organizations. However, due to the state's diverse market sectors, regions are not required to partner at the local level with an organization the State Office has entered into a formal partnership with. Regional centers reflect the communities they serve and are encouraged to enter into formal partnerships with local organizations that will advance their strategic objectives and meet the needs of their small business clients.

### ***Partnerships***

The Florida SBDC Network comprises various vested and key partnerships. These partnerships can be informal in nature, or more structured formally through contracts, agreements or MOUs.

As the State Office pursues partnerships at a statewide, national and cross regional levels, regional offices are encouraged to pursue partnerships with local, region-wide and cross regional partner organizations.

The State Office has the discretion to explore and collaborate with key partners to further support the mission of the network through strategic programs and initiatives. Once opportunities have been identified and discussed with all regional leadership, it is expected that all regional centers will work collaboratively for the success of the statewide initiative.

Examples of stakeholder groups are listed below. The State Office keeps a listing of funding partners, and partners sharing an MOU with the statewide Network. Regional offices should submit a listing of partners (those with contracts (funded or unfunded, MOUs or similar agreements) to the State Office annually with the ACF. Partnerships will be discussed during the CIP process.

### ***Primary Stakeholders –***

- Florida Small Businesses
- Florida SBDC Network Personnel
- Florida SBDC State Office and Host Partner Institutions

#### ***Federal Stakeholders –***

- U.S. Congress
- U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)
- U.S. Department of Defense
- Association of America’s SBDCs
- APEX Accelerators

#### ***State Stakeholders –***

- Florida Legislature
- Executive Office of the Governor
- Florida Commerce
- Select Florida
- CareerSource Florida
- Florida Chamber of Commerce
- Florida Economic Development Council
- FREDA
- AIF
- Florida Department of Management Services
- FloridaMakes

#### ***Local Stakeholders –***

- County and Municipal Government
- Economic Development Organizations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Entrepreneurial Assets

### ***Partner Engagement***

The Florida SBDC Network State Office will communicate regularly with state-level partners, for the purpose of providing updates, coordinating programs and sharing important outreach. Regular updates may be provided in the form of scheduled meetings, calls or email communication.

#### **Host Council Call**

The Florida SBDC Network State Office will host regular meetings to update members of the host institutions, including deans, communications and government affairs personnel. These calls are meant to bolster engagement among host institutions, garner additional support for regional SBDC efforts and goals, and ensure consistency across regions.

#### **SBA District Call**

The Florida SBDC Network State Office hosts regular meetings with the SBA North Florida and South Florida District staff. These calls are meant to share updates on state and regional Network activity, gain support and advice on policy and operational challenges and ensure strong coordination between the Network and the SBA District Offices.

## ***Advisory Boards***

### **State Advisory Board**

The State Advisory Board shall be constructed as outlined in Florida Statutes 288.001 (4). The statewide advisory board shall consist of 19 members from across the state. At least 12 members must be representatives of the private sector who are knowledgeable of the needs and challenges of small businesses. The members must represent various segments and industries of the economy in this state and must bring knowledge and skills to the statewide advisory board which would enhance the board's collective knowledge of small business assistance needs and challenges. Minority and gender representation must be considered when making appointments to the board.

The board meets quarterly through a combination of virtual and in-person meetings. It is non-voting. The reasonable cost of travel of any board member for official board activities may be paid out of the SBDC's budgeted funds, and must follow the University of West Florida's policy for per diem and related travel costs.

### **Regional Advisory Boards**

Each regional center is encouraged to develop an advisory board in order to provide an outside perspective and increase regional buy-in and engagement. Regional centers shall provide a list of their active board members as part of the Continuous Improvement Program (CIP). A majority of the Advisory Board members must be representatives from small businesses or organizations representing small businesses located throughout the entire area of service. The board should be diverse and representative of the demographic makeup of the service area, as appropriate.

The board should meet periodically throughout the year. At the beginning of each calendar year, a schedule of meetings should be provided to the State Office. The State Director or designate shall be permitted to observe advisory board meetings at his/her discretion.

## ***Stakeholder Satisfaction***

The Florida SBDC State Director and the Director of Strategic Partnerships are primarily responsible for maintaining a positive and mutually beneficial relationship with all key stakeholders. The state office will develop and deploy, on behalf of the regional centers, a survey to gauge partner satisfaction. The survey will be personalized to come from the region to their partners. In addition, the Network utilizes continuous informal dialogue for informal feedback. The State Office Leadership meets regularly with SBA district office leadership and representatives to assess the agency's satisfaction with SBDC results and how the network may further assist in accomplishing agency initiatives and goals. The State Director also communicates regularly with the deans, vice presidents and presidents of SBDC host institutions informing them of the network's and centers progress and actively seeks their feedback. The State Director holds regularly scheduled Host Council meetings during the year. The State and Associate State Directors also discuss network performance and policy and procedural issues on a routine basis with Regional Directors (monthly Director's conference calls, quarterly leadership meetings, annual FSBDCN Professional Development Conference, etc.), and in routine correspondence. Regional offices should submit a listing of partners (those with contracts (funded or unfunded, MOUs or similar agreements) to the State Office annually with the ACF.

## ***Affiliates***

The Florida SBDC is a network of partnerships and affiliates. Affiliates are subsidiary groups or organizations that receive direct support that maintain a formal connection for the provision of providing business assistance.

## **Financial Support**

Support provided for affiliate activities may only use Program Income. Other uses of program funds (federal, state or match) are prohibited. Refer to the section on **Program Income** for additional guidance.

## **Recognition**

Affiliate partner organizations provided support by the network are required to acknowledge that support. All regions should refer to the Marketing and Branding Standards for further guidance.

## ***Entrepreneurial Nexus***

The mission of the Florida Entrepreneurial Nexus is to advance entrepreneurialism, resources, and move the needle on the survivability rate of our small businesses through collaborative connections to support growth of Florida's small business community by leveraging existing solutions to strengthen a robust ecosystem. By forging partnerships and leveraging technology, the Entrepreneurial Nexus aims to facilitate connections between entrepreneurs and the tools, knowledge, and funding necessary to grow and thrive.

The Entrepreneurial Nexus connects Florida's entrepreneurs with the following assets:

- Innovation Partners
  - Research universities
  - SOFWERX
  - DWX
  - NASA
  - DARPA
  - Defense Innovation Unit (DIU)
  - Doolittle Institute
  - Florida Venture Forum
  - DoD Innovation Partners
  - Federal Labs
- Economic and Business Development Organizations
  - State Agencies
  - Chambers of Commerce
  - Local EDOs
- Funding Partners/Opportunities
  - SSBCI
  - SBA
  - Angel Investors
  - Venture Capital
  - Rapid Innovation Fund (RIF)

- Small Business Commercial Lenders
  - SBIR/STTR
- Consulting Mentorship
  - Florida SBDC Network
  - APEX Accelerators
- Innovation Office Spaces
  - Accelerators
  - Incubators

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# Strategic Planning Pillar: Perception - Elevate the perception of the Florida SBDC Network Brand

## Policy Title: Brand consistency

**Responsible Department:** Director of Marketing

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2023

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the expectations of brand consistency for all personnel representing the network in an official capacity

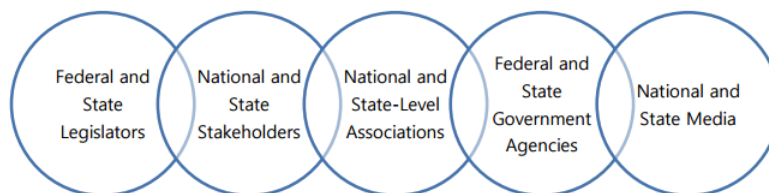
**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** All Florida SBDC personnel (including contract consultants)

### Policy Statement:

The Florida SBDC Network prioritizes brand consistency to ensure our existing and potential clients, stakeholders, partners, and the public are able to recognize us through our colors, fonts, graphics and publishing style. Furthermore, the network strives to ensure clients receive the same quality of service anywhere in the state.

Effective public relations outreach efforts are critical to the region and the network as a whole, as these efforts help us to enhance our brand recognition, demonstrate our impact and successes, raise awareness about the importance of our organization, and better position us for future funding. The network conducts marketing efforts at both the state level and the regional level. The following outlines the responsibilities of Network Headquarters and of the regions.

### Network Headquarters



### Regional & Satellite Centers



Florida SBDC Network personnel are frequently visible in the local community. As such, it is expected that any individual conducting business on behalf of the organization will uphold the Network's brand

standards. Personnel should ensure that all email addresses and signatures, presentation materials, and business cards are representative of the Florida SBDC Network brand. Individuals with outside employment are not allowed to represent their other ventures when acting on official Florida SBDC business. Furthermore, Florida SBDC email contact lists are prohibited from use for personal gain.

To help ensure consistency, the State Office Marketing team maintains **Comprehensive Brand Standards** in the Brand Portal on the Intranet. The network's branding standards provides resources and information to be successful in upholding the network's brand. Regional Directors and/or Marketing Coordinators are responsible for ensuring regional staff are in compliance.

## ***Marketing Coordinators***

Each Florida SBDC region has a Marketing Coordinator. The Coordinator is responsible for administrative duties relative to all marketing representing the center. Time and effort associated with these duties vary from region to region and year to year depending upon the regional resources. The Marketing Coordinator is responsible for the following:

- Participate in scheduled Marketing Coordinator conference calls and in-person meetings
- Ensure staff within your region are informed of strategies, procedures, and standards from the calls
- Have an understanding of the region's marketing efforts to share ideas, concepts, and suggestions for statewide marketing efforts
- Ensure that statewide branding standards are met for local market area
- Track regional success story and testimonial submissions
- Facilitate video and podcasts productions and submissions for the region
- Maintain appropriate knowledge level of legislative efforts
- Share regional best practices for the benefit of the statewide network
- Ensure open communication with the Headquarter's Office

The Director of Marketing & State Office marketing team hold monthly calls with the Marketing Coordinator team to discuss best practices and share updates.

When a region hires a new Marketing Coordinator, it is required that they participate in an onboarding call with the State Office marketing team. During the call, we'll share resources available (including the intranet, brand portal), go over network branding standards, share success story requirements, and answer any questions the new team member has.

## ***Marketing Materials***

The State Office provides all regions with standard materials to help ensure brand consistency. Among the resources provided to regions, include:

- Standard pull-up banners
- Brochures
- Folders
- Video bumpers
- Statewide flyers
- Impact sheets

- Shirts
- Name badges
- Business cards

Marketing coordinators and administrative staff may request additional materials on the intranet by using the [materials request e-form](#).

When needed, the State Office is happy to support regional marketing requests, including videography. To submit a request for assistance with a marketing project or video support, please submit the [SO Marketing Request e-form or videographer request form](#).

### ***Brand Compliance***

Brand consistency is paramount for upholding the network's brand. The State Office reviews brand compliance on an annual and quarterly basis as part of its CIP process.



## **Policy Title: Branded Email Signatures**

**Responsible Department: Director of Marketing**

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2023

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the guidelines for utilizing branded email signatures

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** All Florida SBDC personnel

**Policy Statement:**

To ensure consistency across the state, all network employees (regardless of contract or full-time) are to utilize the statewide standard email signature layout.

From time to time, there may be special highlights that will be required to be included in the signature (ex: Small Business Success Summit, cybersecurity, COVID-19 awareness, etc.). In light of the variety of network services that are important to small businesses during this time, there are several approved email signature options for staff members to select from. These highlights are built into the email signature layout.

## **Policy Title: Intranet Profiles**

**Responsible Department:** Director of Marketing

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2023

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the guidelines for creating and maintaining Intranet profiles

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** All Florida SBDC personnel

### **Policy Statement:**

All new hires should create a detailed Intranet profile. Profiles should be reviewed annually and updated as staff gain certifications or expertise in new service areas. Intranet profiles are important because they are often utilized for:

- Stakeholder reporting
- Marketing purposes (website, reporter inquiries, publications, etc.)
- Awards and recognition
- Staff utilize to explore subject-matter experts for potential co-consulting projects, etc.

Detailed instructions can be accessed on the Intranet under the Marketing Brand Portal.

## **Policy Title: Social Media Policy**

**Responsible Department:** Director of Marketing

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2023

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the guidelines for social media use

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC marketing personnel

**Policy Statement:**

### ***Who We Are on Social Media***

The goal of the Florida SBDC Network's social media strategy is to include and spotlight clients, broadcast and promote discussion, increase the visibility of our brand, traffic to our website, and encourage engagement and relationships using Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, and other platforms as appropriate for our broad audience of former and future stakeholders. No matter the account, personal or business, you are a brand ambassador and represent our brand and network.

### **Social Media Platforms:**

There are a variety of platforms to choose from, but the below represent the primary platforms the Florida SBDC Network utilizes. Use of additional social media platforms requires the approval of the Director of Strategic Communications.

#### ***Facebook***

Facebook offers administrators more variety than other social outlets. Although there is no word limit, moderators should keep posts concise to keep the attention of users. Use hashtags to help build brand awareness. Administrators should aim for at least three posts a week.

#### ***LinkedIn***

This platform is a great way to showcase your page as a thought leader and engage with professional audiences. Use LinkedIn to post articles and share stories that appeal to potential clients and partners.

#### ***X (Formerly Twitter)***

This microblog thrives on concise and clever content that drives users to visit websites, engage in conversation or simply follow along with a brand's initiatives. It is less populated than Facebook, but the public accounts on Twitter allow people to view posts without being an active user. Hashtags were popularized by Twitter and are a great tool for this outlet. Twitter is a high-volume site, so administrators should post often.

#### ***Instagram***

Operating primarily as a visual platform, Instagram is all about creativity. Younger users gravitate to Instagram to share photo and short video clips, as well as, follow their favorite brands and celebrities.

Locations and hashtags are a great way to find potential followers on Instagram, but use appropriate hashtags minimally in your posts. Posts should focus on high quality content, photography and videos that will encourage users to learn more on their own. Instagram is a high-volume site—post daily.

### YouTube

YouTube is a video sharing platform where users can view, like, comment and share content. A centralized YouTube channel is great for cataloging engaging content such as training materials and client success stories.

## *Social Media Guidelines*

Guidelines for functioning in an electronic world are the same as the values, ethics, and confidentiality policies employees are expected to live every day, whether you are tweeting, talking with customers, or chatting over the neighbor's fence. Remember, your responsibility to the Florida SBDC Network does not end when you are off the clock. For that reason, this policy applies to all public social networking websites, blogs, wikis, and other public digital media for both professional and personal use as it relates to Florida SBDC Network.

- Internet postings should not disclose any information that is confidential or proprietary to the Florida SBDC and its partners.
- Internet postings must respect copyright, privacy, fair use, financial disclosure, and other applicable laws.
- Blogs, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, etc., could require approval when the employee is posting about the Florida SBDC. Please use your discretion for the best interest of all parties involved.
- Any content produced using AI should be reviewed and approved by a subject matter expert prior to publishing per the Conflict of Interest and Acceptable Use Policy.
- The Florida SBDC reserves the right to request certain subjects are avoided, withdraw certain posts, and remove inappropriate comments. Profanity on any Florida SBDC social media account is strictly prohibited and will result in banning.
- Employees are expected to adhere to our Statewide Branding Standards when posting about the Florida SBDC—including appropriate use of taglines, logos, names, etc.
- As a public entity your page(s) that allow comment and engagement are considered public forums under the First Amendment. We recommend developing a policy for community engagement, seeking guidance from your host institution's communications and/or legal departments as needed. This policy should be visible to anyone visiting your page. Having this policy in place protects you in the event you need to delete or turn off comments. More information is provided in the "How and When to Respond" section below:
- The Florida SBDC is subject to public record under the State of Florida's Public Records Law ([State Statutes Chapter 119 aka the Sunshine Law](#)) including social media posts. A record of any deleted posts should be maintained. **If you receive a public records request related to your social media account please notify the Director of Strategic Communications ([dgross@uwf.edu](mailto:dgross@uwf.edu)) in addition to appropriate authorities at your host institution.** The following links detail how to download records from each social media account:
  - [Facebook](#)
  - [Instagram](#)
  - [Twitter](#)
  - [LinkedIn](#)
  - [YouTube](#)

If you have any questions, please contact the Director of Strategic Communications at [dfazio@uwf.edu](mailto:dfazio@uwf.edu)

## ***Your Profile***

Brand consistency helps identify our message against the thousands of images and information shouting for attention in today's world. When achieved, it projects a unified image in a marketplace and clarifies a competitive advantage. That's why it's important that all of our social media profiles are uniform. For more information, find the Florida SBDC brand portal [here](#).

Be sure to correctly name your profile and account handle:

**Don't use:**

UWF SBDC

Florida SBDC @ UWF

Florida Small Business Network

**Do use:**

Florida SBDC at UWF

## **Development of Social Media Outlets**

### ***Create a Strategy***

Two key aspects of social media are the strategy and goals behind your social media platform. Based on your target audience, your social media platform, content, media and insights should all be a part of a specific strategy. These strategies should align with the [Florida SBDC Network Strategic Plan](#).

### ***Choose Appropriate Platforms***

There are a variety of social media platforms and tools available to share content, profiles, opinions, insights and media. The appropriate social media platform should reach a specific target audience.

- Do not feel that you have to utilize every platform that is available. It is better to use one platform really well rather than have multiple platforms that sit dormant.

### ***Choose Appropriate Social Media Content Providers***

Regional directors are responsible for the appointment of administrative rights to appropriate personnel. Suggested appropriate content providers are directors and marketing coordinators.

## ***Building a relationship with our audience***

### **Know Your Audience**

To provide appropriate content and messages through social media, various or specific audiences must be determined to be reached through the appropriate platform. Messaging should be clear so that the target audience understands the purpose of your site. Be sure you are adding value to the online community by posting relevant and useful information.

### ***50/30/20 Rule***

Why this is important: This rule of thumb helps to keep you from overselling our brand and losing followers in the end. This approach helps encourage conversions and maintains the bond and relationship between the Florida SBDC Network and our audience.

- Engage/ Entertain(50) - Making it Personal
  - Half of what you are posting on social should be geared towards engaging with your followers online
- Inform (30) - Solving Problems
  - People are usually following brands on social media to get the latest updates and keep themselves informed. 30% of your content should be centered around educating your audience on the latest revolving around the Florida SBDC but is not sales-focused. This includes sharing and keeping our audience up to date with various SBA programs
- Promote (20) - Promoting our brand
  - The last 20% is reserved for promoting the Florida SBDC and any services we may provide.

## ***What to Post and what not to post***

### ***Do Post:***

- SBDC Webinar Opportunities
- Promo SBDC services
- News articles featuring the SBDC or FSBDC
- Relevant posts provided in our SO toolkits
- SBA Program Updates
- Carefully consider federal holidays (Especially being respectful - ex. Memorial Day)
- Fun days “Food Truck Day” preferable tie-in with our clients or services
- Client success stories
- Client quotes/testimonials

### ***Do NOT post:***

- Opinionated or politically one-sided articles
- Social Issues - especially those that are politically one-sided
- Personal opinions and messages
- Reposts from non-partner information
- Quotes from unverified or unknown authors
- Political affiliations

### ***Use Your Best Judgment***

- Social media is viewable and open to the public. If there is any doubt about posting content on a site, then do not proceed. Certain posts can have consequences that can affect the network.

### ***Personal accounts -***

- Take care to separate their personal accounts from any SBDC affiliated accounts
- Use caution when posting something that could be considered controversial such as social issues, political or hateful
- Engage carefully and respectfully

## **Tips when posting:**

### *Post regularly/consistently:*

- While the number of times per day or per week a center chooses to post may vary, it is important to regularly update social sites in order to stay relevant.

### *Check Your Facts:*

- Any facts shared via social media should be proved valid prior to posting. If a mistake is made, it should be honestly identified and corrected.

### *Think twice and re-read before posting:*

- All social media is public—and permanent. Make sure any content shared is accurate, grammatically correct, and necessary.

### *Slow down—think before you post:*

- Consider the content carefully and be cautious about disclosing personal information, opinions, or making statements that you may regret later. Remember to remain nonpartisan. Be inclusive when sharing images.

### *Encourage Conversation:*

- Do not turn into a one-way broadcaster; this defeats the purpose of social media. Be sure you leave the ‘Social’ in Social Media. It is not always advisable to block comments just because they are negative. Use negative comments as an opportunity for discussion.
- Like or reply to comments on your posts to boost engagement and/or field questions.

### *Measuring your social media activity:*

- **Engagement** means how many people interacted with your social media outreach via shares, clickthrough, likes, re-tweets, direct messages, site visits and comments.
- **Impressions** are the number of times your content is displayed.
- **Reach** displays the total number of people who see your content.
- Each platform allows users to track their social media activity.

## **Using special characters, hashtags, and memes:**

### *Special Characters/Emojis*

- Emojis can be used to connect with our customer base and add a little bit of fun to our posts.
  - Make sure your emojis make sense
  - Don't use emojis in a serious situation
  - Don't overuse emojis in a single post

### **Hashtags**

- Hashtags are used to help a customer find us on social media. Consider hashtagging keywords in your social posts.
  - #smallbiz
  - #PaycheckProtection

- #WomenInBusiness
- Hashtags are also used when an event is trending. It's important to use these to join in on the conversation.
  - #COVID19
  - #SBLConference
  - Hurricane #Elsa

### **Memes**

- Memes are typically used one way - to make something funny.
- It's important to use memes carefully and consider how your audience will read the meme
- Avoid using memes that include sensitive or suggestive material
- Avoid using memes in a serious situation
- Memes should still follow our brand guidelines

### **Tagging Other Users**

- Tagging is used to identify other individuals or organizations associated with your post.
- Reserve tagging for individuals actually in your photo (preferably, the photo is flattering of them - use your best judgment!)
- Tag when using someone else's content - give credit where credit is due.

## **How and When to Respond:**

### ***Voice and tone:***

Demonstrating an open, responsive attitude towards your community shows respect for users and embodies the values you are trying to portray through your social content.

Example response: "Thank you for your response, Julia! We're sorry you are having issues... We have direct messaged you regarding this situation."

Not with this: "Your response has been noted and will be responded to by one of our team members within 2-3 business days."

### ***Navigating various posters:***

While social media platforms are meant to spark engagement between stakeholders and an organization, not all comments will be positive and/or appropriate for the platform. As mentioned above, implementing a publicly visible community engagement policy will help alleviate many challenges from unwanted posters. Below is a sample policy statement from the U.S. Department of Interior:

"We welcome your comments and hope that our conversations here will be courteous. You are fully responsible for the content of your comments.

"We do not discriminate against any views, but we reserve the right to delete any of the following:

- off-topic comments
- violent, vulgar, obscene, profane, hateful, or racist comments
- comments that threaten or defame any person or organization
- the violation of the privacy of another individual



- solicitations, advertisements, or endorsements of any financial, commercial, or non-governmental agency
- comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity
- comments promoting or opposing any person who is campaigning for election to a political office or promoting or opposing any ballot proposition
- comments including phone numbers, email addresses, residential addresses, or similar information
- multiple, successive off-topic posts by a single user
- repetitive posts copied and pasted by multiple users

“Communication made through this service’s e-mail and/or messaging system will in no way constitute a legal or official notice or comment to the U.S. Department of the Interior (or bureau) or any official or employee of the U.S. Department of the Interior (or bureau) for any purpose.

“References to commercial entities, products, services, or nongovernmental organizations or individuals are provided solely for information. These references are not intended to reflect the opinion of U.S. Department of the Interior (or bureau), the United States Government, or its officers or employees concerning the significance, priority, or importance to be given the referenced entity, product, service, or organization. Such references are not an official or personal endorsement of any product, person, or service and may not be quoted or reproduced for the purpose of stating or implying U.S. Department of the Interior (or bureau) endorsement or approval of any product, person, or service.

“Reporters or other media representatives are asked to send questions through their normal channels (the appropriate DOI/bureau office public affairs or communications office) and to refrain from submitting questions here as comments. Reporter questions may be removed.

“This Comment Policy is subject to amendment or modification at any time to ensure that its continued use is consistent with its intended purpose as a limited forum.”

#### ***Responding to Negative Comments:***

- Respond publicly but move the discussion to a private space as quickly as possible - ex. “Kate, we are so sorry you’ve had a negative experience. Please private message us with your email address so we can help you resolve the issue.”

#### ***Responding to Trolls:***

- Unlike an upset user, who will likely be appeased after receiving a personal response to their concern, trolls take pleasure in making negative, controversial comments that provoke others. Recommended best practices are as follows:
  - Stay professional.
  - Gently refer posters to your publicly visible social engagement policy. Otherwise do not engage.
  - Try not to block the user as it will likely only fuel them further.
  - Report any abusive posts to the relevant social media outlet.

### Responding to Media Inquiries:

- If you receive a media inquiry via social media it is best not to answer their questions publicly. Instead, politely refer them to the appropriate communications contact within your region for further assistance - ex. "Hi John, thank you for reaching out. Please reach out to [communications@sbdc.org](mailto:communications@sbdc.org) for more assistance." You can also include a statement in your community engagement policy (see above).

### Responding to Political Comments:

- Again, if you choose to engage, politely refer the poster to your community engagement policy, reminding them that the page is non-partisan.

### Responding to Tags:

- A positive shoutout - Thank the poster for the acknowledgement. - ex: "Thanks for the kind words Mark! We are always here to help when you need us."
- Feedback - Make sure they know you received their feedback - ex: Thanks for reaching out David! We will be sure to share this with our leadership team."
- Asking for help and/or complaints - Same as "responding to negative comments" above - Respond publicly but take offline.
- Events - "Thanks @FloridaChamberFoundation! We were honored to present at the Future of Florida Forum today!"

## **Social Media Accessibility Guidelines**

As online communities have become an important means of social interaction and community participation, ensuring their universal accessibility is essential for inclusion at the Florida SBDC Network. Social media accounts and content associated with the network should be designed, developed and edited making a best effort to uphold accessibility standards, in order to allow for all users to have equal access to information and functionality.

Social media is not always completely accessible due to the limited technical control over social media platforms and posted content. Below are the **recommended social media accessibility best practices**:

- Most major social media platforms have accessibility help pages that provide directions on how to make content posted as accessible as possible.
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - Instagram
  - LinkedIn
  - YouTube
- Photos posted on social media outlets should contain alternative text descriptions.
  - Facebook, Twitter and Instagram all have the ability to edit and customize alt text captions retroactively.
  - Facebook and Instagram generate an automatic general alt text, but allow accounts to edit the alt text on their website or app after posting.
  - When editing an automatic general alt text, provide descriptive captions for images.
    - Make sure you are describing the content of the image. Mention colors, people, scenes, etc.

- Provide captions and an audio transcript with every video. Export an SRT caption file and a “burned in” captioned version of the video for each project. SRT files should be named VIDEONAME.en\_US.srt.
  - Many social media platforms do not support transcript files or have automatic captioning. Hosting your videos through YouTube allows for captions and links transcript files.
  - YouTube also allows you to upload a text file, or transcribe your video in real time.
    - Resources: Premiere Pro Captioning Tutorial
- Graphics posted should rarely contain text.
  - Posters, invitations, postcards and other media that are designed for print are not recommended for use on social media. Print materials are not designed for web applications, as they contain embedded text and print color modes, and their linear structure often does not correspond well to social media or websites.
  - Avoid placing text on a graphic or photo. Instead, text should always be incorporated into the caption. Alt text is helpful for a subset of users with low vision, but some users magnify content instead of using screen readers. Magnified images containing text become blurry and unreadable.
    - There are some instances when text is needed on a graphic. In this situation, the text should be minimal as to not crowd the graphic and the text must be present in the associated caption. Font on the graphics needs to be legible and a color that contrasts with the photo.
    - When using call-to-action words on a graphic, avoid being generic like “click here.” Be descriptive with words like “swipe up for more information” or “apply here.”
- It is always best to use the organization name in your social media post captions. When only the acronym is used for the name, it can be confusing to users who do not know what the acronym stands for.
- When using hashtags, capitalize the first letter of each word within the hashtag.
- Limit the use of emojis and emoticons in social media posts. Screen readers will use descriptions for each emoji and each character within emoticons which can become time consuming and affect user experience.
- Animated GIFs have limited accessibility support on social media platforms. The use of GIFs should be limited and not be the main content in a post.



## **Policy Title: Written and Video Success Stories**

**Responsible Department:** Director of Marketing

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2023

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the guidelines for written and video success stories

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC marketing personnel

### **Policy Statement:**

The SBA requires the Florida SBDC Network to submit client success stories as part of Network's quarterly reports. To meet this requirement, the network requires each region to complete written and video success stories. Regions must submit verified stories in Salesforce by the EDMIS lock date in the beginning of the following year to count towards their regional requirement. The network has established the following success story requirements. Story progress is reviewed as part of the Q2 and Q4 CIP:

- **8 written success stories annually** – UWF, UNF, UCF, USF, FGCU, FIU, FAU
- **4 written success stories annually**– FAMU, IRSC
- **4 video stories** – ALL

Florida SBDCs should be strategic when selecting clients to capture success stories.

### ***A "Full" Client Success Story Includes***

1. Professionally-written Client Story
2. Client Satisfaction Quote
3. Print Quality, Color Photo
4. Signed Client Release

Stories that are missing any of the 4 items are not included in the quarterly count.

### **Ideal Areas to Consider When Selecting Clients for a Success Story**

- *Type of Impact:* Jobs Created, Sales Growth, Government Contract/s Acquired, Export Sales Generated, Loan Secured
- *Type of Assistance:* Export Marketing Plan, Growth Acceleration, Government Contracting, Disaster Response/Bridge Loan/SBA Disaster Loan, Capital Access

Also, take into consideration the level of satisfaction the client has with the business assistance he or she received from the Florida SBDC. Did our services make a difference and/or did they contribute to the business in a positive manner?

### **Key Elements of a Quality Success Story**

1. Description of the business
2. Background information

3. Problem(s) the client faced
4. Type of assistance provided by the Florida SBDC (i.e. business planning, government procurement, research, international trade, educational programs, student projects, etc.)
5. Outcome and impact (i.e. acquired loan, started business, increased sales, created/retained jobs, awarded contracts, etc.)
6. Client quote highlighting the client's satisfaction with the Florida SBDC
7. Color digital photo highlighting client, consultant and services/products (action-oriented) (300 dpi)

Draft

## **Policy Title: Videographer Policy**

**Responsible Department:** Director of Marketing

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2023

**Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the guidelines for utilizing the State Office videography services.

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** Florida SBDC marketing personnel

### **Policy Statement:**

Please be aware that any region at any time may approach the State Office videographer for video projects using regional resources. However, if the State Office's resources are needed to produce the videos, regions are required to comply with the following video policy to ensure efficiency of resources:

1. In accordance with the success story policy, a success story is constituted as such when a client details that the business assistance he/she received from the Florida SBDC Network made a difference and/or contributed to the business in a positive manner. As such, videos must clearly detail the impact of the Florida SBDC's service offering. Targeted questions must be asked during the interview to capture this information, including but not limited to:
  - How did the Florida SBDC help you?
  - How did the Florida SBDC make an impact in your life?
  - What value did the Florida SBDC bring to your business?
  - Would you recommend the Florida SBDC to another business owner?
  - If so, why?
2. Before the videographer leaves for an overnight trip, regions must submit the filming schedule to the State Office for approval to ensure his/her time is used to the fullest capacity.
3. A minimum of four success stories must be shot when the videographer is deployed to a region that is over a two-hour drive.
4. A minimum number of consultant/professional staff videos (if they are not currently on file) will need to be shot when the videographer is deployed to a region. The number will depend on the number of employees in that region and if the consultant/professional staff videos are currently on file. This number can be negotiated when the request is made.

Regions/centers are required to complete a "[Request HQ Videographer](#)" e-Form on the Intranet to request statewide resources for local video projects. As always, the State Office is extremely happy to make the videographer's time available to all regions.

### ***Acknowledgment of SBA***

SBDCs must include an acknowledgment of support statement on all materials produced in whole or in part with Project Funds.

For purposes of this requirement, the term "materials" includes, but is not limited to, press releases, brochures, pamphlets, handouts, reports, advertisements, books, curricula, websites, video or audio

productions, and similar items regardless of the medium employed. The term “materials” does not include stationery or business cards and SBA’s logo may not be used on such items.

Where you use Project Funds to produce materials featuring editorial content, SBDCs must also use an alternate acknowledgment of support statement (either independently or in conjunction with the SBA logo).

Where used, the acknowledgment of support statement must be presented in a legible typeface, font size, and (where applicable) color contrast and must appear verbatim and may not be altered or replaced with substitute language. However, on materials with severe space constraints an alternative may be used with the prior approval of the Director of Communications of the Florida SBDC Network. Similarly, any materials for APEX should include the appropriate acknowledgement of the Department of Defense. [See the APEX Accelerator Appendix for appropriate language.](#)

SBDCs may elect to use SBA’s logo on materials produced with Project Funds. A high resolution copy of SBA’s logo can be found on the intranet under Marketing. Where used, the SBA logo may be positioned in close proximity to the Florida SBDC Network logo or may be placed in a prominent location elsewhere in the material. However, SBA’s logo may not be placed in proximity to any third party’s logo, including host partner logo, or used in such a way as may imply that a relationship exists between SBA and any third party. Additionally, in each instance where the SBA logo is used, it must also include the acknowledgement of a support statement in reasonable proximity to the logo.

Neither the SBA logo nor the acknowledgment of support statement may be used in connection with activities outside the scope of this Award. In particular, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES may the SBA logo or acknowledgment of support statement appear on items used in conjunction with fundraising, lobbying, or the express or implied endorsement of any goods, service, entity, or individual.

**Reference the Florida SBDC Network Marketing and Branding Standards for the appropriate acknowledgement verbiage.**

## **Policy Title: Legislative Engagement**

**Responsible Department:** Director of Strategic Partnerships

**Revision Date:** February 23, 2024

- I. Policy/Purpose:** This policy outlines the process and best practices for engaging with elected officials
- II. Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy:** All Florida SBDC Network Staff
- III. Policy Statement:**

Legislative engagement is a network-wide priority, as developing and maintaining positive relationships with elected officials is essential to the sustainability of the Florida SBDC Network. To develop and maintain these relationships, it is necessary to ensure that those who are responsible for funding decisions are routinely educated to ensure they understand what we do, who we serve, and the impact we have on Florida's economy.

While engaging with elected officials is an important role for all Network staff, it is important to separate your "official" positions from those you may have in your personal life. As an employee of the Florida SBDC Network, you may not advocate or take an official position on matters on behalf of the Network. However, on your own time you are a private citizen. You may participate in rallies, voter registration, knock on doors, etc. You MAY NOT use your position at an SBDC in this context and should not wear SBDC branded shirts, hats, pins, etc. to political events.

Florida SBDC Network leadership and staff should **refer to the Legislative Engagement Guide** for guidance on interacting with legislators and do's and don'ts of legislative engagement.



## **Policy Title: Signature Events**

**Responsible Department: Director of Strategic Partnerships, Director of Marketing**

**Revision Date: February 23, 2024**

**Policy/Purpose: This section highlights the role of events in advancing the mission of the network**

**Who does this govern and who needs to know this policy: Regional leadership and Marketing Coordinators**

**Policy Statement:**

The Florida SBDC Network hosts various events annually, with the goal of promoting the importance of small businesses throughout the state, and supporting small business owners through training, education and networking. Success of these statewide events is only possible through Network-wide support. The Network also works to support partner events that further the mission of the Network.

- Small Business Day at the Capitol is held each year during the state legislative session. The event provides an opportunity for the entire network to gather in Tallahassee to showcase the work of the Network and Florida's small businesses as well as hold meetings with local elected officials. The event also serves as one of the in person Advisory Board meetings.
- The Small Business Success Summit is held each summer and rotates from region to region. The event attracts Florida Small Businesses and stakeholders while educating about the work of the Network, providing relevant topics on small business concerns, and networking among peers. The event coincides with the Network's Annual PD Conference and Awards Celebration and serves as the second in person meeting for the Advisory Board.
- The Florida SBDC Annual PD Conference and Awards Celebration is held in conjunction with the Small Business Success Summit. All staff are expected to attend both events to benefit from professional development offerings, strengthen relationships with colleagues from across the state, and gain insight into the overall strategic direction of the network.
- Regional Events - Many regions host their own local events in support of the network's mission and Florida's Small Businesses. These events are often held during the SBAs National Small Business Week.