



NEWS RELEASE

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SBA BUSINESS INFORMATION CENTERS UPGRADE EQUIPMENT AND EXPAND SERVICE

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) today announced that it is upgrading equipment and adding new services for small business customers at 84 business information centers (BICs) across the country.

“This is a small business economy,” said Aida Alvarez, Administrator of the SBA. **“To assist the small business community, the SBA started the business information center program in 1992. Last year, the BICs served more than 123,000 small business customers. By working closely with local small business owners, each BIC provides services specific to the needs of its community while emphasizing the importance of technology for small businesses today.”**

BICs provide free on-site counseling, training courses and workshops to small business clients in areas that include business planning, marketing and sales, product expansion and exporting. The centers have resources that address a broad variety of business start-up and development needs.

The centers also offer numerous research materials, including business and industry publications, CD-ROMs, databases, and the latest in software and hardware to assist small business owners in starting, building and growing their business. Hewlett-Packard multimedia printers, accessible at centers nationwide, are the latest addition to the list of tools the BICs make available to small business clients. The printers were made possible through a partnership agreement between the SBA and Hewlett-Packard.

In addition, the SBA has partnered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for a pilot program to provide on-site tax counseling from IRS staff at selected BIC locations. Currently, those are Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago and Atlanta. The second edition of a joint SBA/IRS CD-ROM on starting a small business will be available at all BIC locations by April 1, 2000, along with a variety of other IRS publications.

BIC locations are accessible from the SBA Web site at www.sba.gov/services.

For more information on all of SBA's programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1 800 U ASK SBA, or visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov.

Kids Count! The SBA supports Census 2000 and the Census in Schools Program. Help ensure that every child is counted. Check the Census Bureau's Internet site at www.census.gov.

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