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PRESS RELEASE

Release Date: October 10, 2002
Contact: Kelly McLeod, Marketing Specialist, kmcleod@uwf.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Assistance Program for Adversely Impacted Defense-Related Small Businesses Gets Federal Funding for Four Florida Communities

Pensacola, FL: The Florida Small Business Development Center Network has announced that it has received a \$365,000 contract from the U.S. Small Business Administration to provide management and technical transition assistance to four targeted Florida communities with defense-dependent populations adversely impacted by adjustments in defense spending; base closures and realignments; reductions in military and civilian employees; shrinkage or elimination of markets for defense-dependent firms and their subcontractors; as well as disruptions associated with the terrorist attacks in 2001. Known as the Defense Economic Transition Assistance (DETA) program, the SBDC Network will be funded for a three-year period that began September 30th.

The Florida DETA is tied directly to earlier awards made by Enterprise Florida Inc.'s (EFI) Community Defense Grant Program, which was created by the Florida Legislature to assist communities in analyzing their economic reliance on defense expenditures and to formulate specific plans to respond to the nation's defense priorities. The grant program focuses primarily on providing annual planning grants to critical defense-dependent communities. SBDC specialists will coordinate with the top four defense-community grant awardees to address the local needs of three identified targeted populations: employees of defense contractors that are transitioning out of current employment; small defense contractors and sub-contractors; and small firms that are defense dependent but do not sell directly to the Department of Defense or defense-related prime contractors. Management and technical counseling and educational training assistance will be tailored to meet the specific population needs in each of these business communities.

"The Florida DETA is a value-added program to those communities and target populations injured by base closures and realignments," says FSBDC Network State Director Jerry Cartwright. "This program brings direct services to those adversely affected and who otherwise have no where else to turn for assistance. The Government, up to this point, has assisted the 'in-the-base' impact by moving people and consolidating activities. You can't just up and move hundreds of small businesses."

The DETA program is administered by the University of West Florida's FSBDC Network State Director's Office and is in the Lead DETA service area. A full-time specialist will work in Pensacola to manage program activities with three other participating DETA SBDCs, as well as provide direct counseling and training in Pensacola, Milton, Fort Walton Beach and Panama City, which host Corry Station, NAS, Tyndall AFB, NAS Whiting, Eglin and Hurlburt AFB's and Duke Field. Other defense impacted communities receiving direct services and participating in the DETA SBDC program are Brevard County, host to NASA and Patrick Air Force Base; Hillsborough, Pinellas and Highlands Counties, hosts to MacDill AFB and Avon Park Air Force Range; and Dade County, host to Homestead Air Reserve Base and U.S. Southern Command.

Defense specialists will be in place at the SBDCs in Pensacola, Tampa, Melbourne and Miami to provide direct services to small defense-dependent businesses and employees needing assistance. For additional information about the DETA program, contact Jerry Cartwright at 850-595-6060 x222 or jcartwri@uwf.edu.

The FSBDC Network is the First Source For Business Assistance, with over 25 years of experience helping entrepreneurs start and grow successful businesses in Florida. The Network features 31 centers throughout the state. Through the Network and its professionally trained Certified Business Analysts, existing small business owners and prospective entrepreneurs in all industries and every phase of development have access to free and confidential, one-on-one counseling in virtually any area of business management, as well as entrepreneurial training events and information resources.

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A statewide service network partially funded by the U.S. SBA, sponsored by the State University System of Florida, and administered by the University of West Florida