

(a) (1) The Secretary shall contract with a public agency, an institution of higher education, or a private contractor in each major region of the State to serve as a PRIMARY OR SECONDARY small business [extension service] DEVELOPMENT CENTER contractor.

(2) One contractor shall be retained within each of the following regions:

(i) Western: Garrett, Allegany, AND Washington[, Frederick, and Carroll] counties;

(ii) Central: Howard, CARROLL, ANNE ARUNDEL, HARFORD, CECIL, and Baltimore counties and Baltimore City;

(iii) Southern: [Anne Arundel,] Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties;

(iv) [Eastern: Harford, Cecil,] UPPER SHORE: Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Caroline, AND Dorchester[, Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester] counties; [and]

(v) Suburban Washington: Montgomery, FREDERICK, and Prince George's counties; AND

(VI) LOWER SHORE: SOMERSET, WICOMICO, AND WORCESTER COUNTIES.

(3) ONE OR MORE SECONDARY CONTRACTORS MAY BE SELECTED TO OPEATE SATELLITE SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS WITHIN A REGION.

†3† (4) Each contractor shall utilize the expertise of successful business persons, educational institutions, public officials, the Federal Small Business Administration, and other private or public resources to provide extension services to small businesses within the designated region.

†4† (5) The Department shall coordinate with the contractors for each designated area to effectuate the purposes of this subtitle.

~~†5† EACH REGION SHALL RECEIVE NOT LESS THAN 10 PERCENT NOR MORE THAN 20 PERCENT OF THE FUNDS AVAILABLE TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE PROGRAM.~~

(6) EXCEPT AS SPECIFIED IN SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION, EACH PRIMARY CONTRACTOR IN A REGION SHALL RECEIVE NOT LESS THAN 8 PERCENT OF THE FUNDS AVAILABLE TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE PROGRAM.

(B) (1) IN ANY CASE WHERE ONLY 1 SECONDARY CONTRACTOR IS SELECTED, THE SECONDARY CONTRACTOR MAY NOT RECEIVE LESS THAN 5 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE.