

(2) The Department shall foster, support, and assist the economic growth and revitalization of small business in Maryland by coordinating the efforts of small business extension services throughout the State.

(b) (1) In this subtitle the following terms have the meanings indicated.

(2) "Program" means the Maryland Small Business Development Center Program.

(3) "Secretary" means the Secretary of BUSINESS AND Economic [and Employment] Development.

(4) "Small business" means any Maryland business concern that is independently owned and operated and is not dominant in its field or industry.

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(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 development center contractor.

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

(i) Western: Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties;

(ii) Central: Howard, Carroll, Anne Arundel, Harford, Cecil, and Baltimore Counties and Baltimore City;

(iii) Southern: Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties;

(iv) Upper Shore: Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Caroline, and Dorchester Counties;

(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 operate satellite small business development centers within a region.

(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.

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

(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.