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§ 119.1 What is the Program for Investment in Microentrepreneurs (“PRIME” or “the Act”)?



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PRIME authorizes SBA to make grants to “qualified organizations” to fund training and technical assistance for disadvantaged entrepreneurs, build these organizations' own capacity to give training and technical assistance, fund research and development of “best practices” in microenterprise development and technical assistance programs for disadvantaged microentrepreneurs, and to fund other undertakings the Administrator or designee deems consistent with these purposes.

§ 119.2 Definitions.



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For the purposes of this part, the following definitions apply:

Capacity Building Grant means a grant made under the Act identified under §119.4(b).

Capacity building services means services provided to an organization or program that is currently, or is developing as, a microenterprise development organization or program, for the purpose of enhancing its ability to provide training and technical assistance to disadvantaged microentrepreneurs.

Collaborative means two or more nonprofit entities that agree to act jointly as a qualified organization under this part.

Developer means a person interested in starting or acquiring a microenterprise.

Disadvantaged entrepreneur, or disadvantaged microentrepreneur, means the owner, majority owner, or developer, of a microenterprise who is also—

- (1) A low-income person;
- (2) A very low-income person; or
- (3) An entrepreneur who lacks adequate access to capital or other resources essential for business

success, or is economically disadvantaged, as defined in this part.

Discretionary Grant means a grant made under the Act identified under §119.4(d).

Economically disadvantaged entrepreneur, or economically disadvantaged microentrepreneur, means an owner, majority owner, or developer of a microenterprise whose ability to compete in the free enterprise system has been impaired due to diminished capital and credit opportunities as compared to others in the industry such that his or her ownership of a small business would help to qualify the small business for assistance under section 7(j) or section 8(a) programs of the Small Business Act.

Grantee means a recipient of a grant under the Act.

Group has the same meaning as “collaborative” as defined in this section.

Indian tribe means any Indian tribe, band, pueblo, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation, as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services the United States provides to Indians because of their status as Indians.

Indian tribe jurisdiction means Indian country, as defined in 18 U.S.C. 1151, and any other lands, title to which is either held by the United States in trust for the benefit of any Indian tribe or individual or held by any tribe or individual subject to a restriction by the United States against alienation, and any land held by Alaska Native groups, regional corporations, and village corporations, as defined in or established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, public domain Indian allotments, and former Indian reservations in the State of Oklahoma.

Intermediary means a private, nonprofit entity serving or seeking to serve microenterprise development organizations or programs identified under §119.3.

Large microenterprise development organization or program means a microenterprise development organization or program with 10 or more full time employees or equivalents, including its executive director, as of the date it files its application with SBA for a PRIME grant.

Local community means an identifiable area and population constituting a political subdivision of a state.

Low-income person means a person having an income, adjusted for family size, of not more than—

(1) For metropolitan areas, 80 percent of the median income; and

(2) For non-metropolitan areas, the greater of—

- (i) 80 percent of the area median income; or
- (ii) 80 percent of the statewide non-metropolitan area median income.

Microenterprise means a sole proprietorship, partnership or corporation that—

- (1) Has fewer than 5 employees, including the owner; and
- (2) Generally lacks access to conventional loans, equity, or other banking services.

Microenterprise development organization or program means a nonprofit entity, or a program administered by such an entity, including community development corporations or other nonprofit development organizations and social service organizations, that provides services to disadvantaged microentrepreneurs.

Qualified organization means an organization eligible for a PRIME grant identified under §119.3.

Research and Development Grant means a grant made under the Act identified under §119.4(c).

Severe constraints on available sources of matching funds means the documented inability of a qualified organization applying for a PRIME grant to raise matching funds or in-kind resources from non-Federal sources during the 2 years immediately prior to the date of its application because of a lack of or increased scarcity of monetary or in-kind resources from potential non-Federal sources.

Small microenterprise development organization or program means a microenterprise development organization or program with less than 10 full time employees or equivalents, including its executive director, as of the date it files its application with SBA for a PRIME grant.

Technical Assistance Grant means a grant made under the Act identified under §119.4(a).

Training and technical assistance means services and support provided to disadvantaged entrepreneurs, such as, but not limited to, assistance intended to enhance business planning, marketing, management, financial management skills, business operations, or assistance for the purpose of increasing access to loans and other financial services.

Very low-income person means having an income adjusted for family size of not more than 150 percent of the poverty line, as defined in section 673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act, 42 U.S.C. 9902(2), including any revision required by that section.

§ 119.3 What types of organizations are eligible for PRIME grants?



An organization eligible for a PRIME grant (“qualified organization”) is one that is:

- (a) A microenterprise development organization or program as defined in §119.2(q) (or a group or collaborative thereof) that has a demonstrated record of delivering microenterprise services to disadvantaged microentrepreneurs;
- (b) An intermediary, as defined in §119.2(l);
- (c) A microenterprise development organization or program as defined in §119.2(q) that is accountable to a local community, working with a State or local government or Indian tribe; or
- (d) An Indian tribe acting on its own, if the Indian tribe can certify that no private organization or program referred to in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of this section exists within its jurisdiction.

§ 119.4 What services or activities must PRIME grant funds be used for?



A recipient of a PRIME grant (“grantee”) must use PRIME grants to—

- (a) Provide training and technical assistance to disadvantaged microentrepreneurs (“Technical Assistance Grant”);
- (b) Provide training and capacity building services to microenterprise development organizations and programs to assist them to develop microenterprise training and services (“Capacity Building Grant”);
- (c) Aid in researching and developing the best practices in the field of microenterprise development and technical assistance programs for disadvantaged microentrepreneurs (“Research and Development Grant”); or
- (d) Conduct such other activities as the Administrator or designee determines to be consistent with the purposes of the Act (“Discretionary Grant”).

§ 119.5 How are PRIME grant awards allocated?



- (a) At least 50 percent of the number of grant awards made under this part will be awarded to qualified

organizations that benefit very low-income persons, including those residing on Indian reservations. In general, SBA will make grant award decisions to serve diverse populations by including as recipients both large and small microenterprise development organizations, and organizations serving urban, rural, and Indian tribal communities.

(b) SBA will allocate the funding available for awards as follows:

- (1) A minimum of 75 percent for Technical Assistance Grants;
- (2) A minimum of 15 percent for Capacity Building Grants; and
- (3) The remaining 10 percent or less may be allocated by SBA, in its sole discretion to be used for:
 - (i) Research and Development Grants; or
 - (ii) Discretionary Grants.

§ 119.6 What are the minimum and maximum amounts for an award?



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- (a) The minimum grant award for Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Grants will be \$50,000 during the first year of the award, subject to the availability of funds.
- (b) There is no minimum grant award for Research and Development or Discretionary Grants.
- (c) The maximum amount that an individual grant recipient may receive in any fiscal year from a single award or multiple awards, under any of the purposes of the program, may not exceed \$250,000 or 10 percent of the total grant funds available for award in that fiscal year, whichever is less.

§ 119.7 How long and in what amounts will grant funding be available to a single grantee?



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- (a) Generally, the funding period for a PRIME grant will be one year. Subject to availability of funds and continuing authorization, funding may be available on an annual basis allowing for the initial grant plus up to four option years, for a project period of up to five years. Decisions regarding option year awards and the funding levels of these awards will depend upon availability of funding and the grantee's performance as measured against project objectives and milestones. A grantee that enters into a cooperative agreement must submit a separate application to have the support continued for each

subsequent year. In all cases, continuation awards require a determination by SBA that continued funding is in the best interest of the Federal government. Neither the approval of any application nor the entering into of any cooperative agreement commits or obligates the Federal Government in any way to make any additional, supplemental, continuation or other award with respect to any grantee.

(b) For Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Grants, after a grantee receives an initial grant, funding for any option year(s) must be no more than 67 percent of the initial grant amount.

(c) For Research and Development and Discretionary Grants, after a grantee receives an initial grant, funding for any option year(s) will be approved at the discretion of the SBA.

(d) In the final year of a project, grantees may apply to extend the expiration date of a grant if additional time beyond the established expiration date is required to assure adequate completion of the original scope of work within the funds already made available. For this purpose, the grantee may make an extension request for a one-time, no-cost extension, not to exceed 12 months, prior to the established expiration date. Written notification of such an extension, with the supporting reasons, must be received by the SBA Grant Officer at least 60 days prior to the expiration of the award. SBA reserves the right to disapprove the extension if the requirements set forth in OMB Circular A–110, paragraph .25(e)(2) are not met or if the extension is not in the best interests of SBA.

§ 119.8 Are there matching requirements for grantees?



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Applicants and grantees must match SBA funding as follows:

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (c) of this section, applicants and grantees must match Federal assistance with funds from sources other than the Federal Government in an amount not less than 50 percent of the grant amount awarded each year. Sources such as fees, grants, gifts, income from loan sources, and in-kind resources of a grant recipient from non-Federal public or private sources may be used to comply with the matching funds requirement;

(b) Grantees receiving funds in option years as described in §119.7(b) through (c) are subject to the matching requirements of this section.

(c) Applicants or grantees with severe constraints on available sources of matching funds may request that the Administrator or designee reduce or eliminate the matching requirements. Any reductions or eliminations must not exceed 10 percent of the aggregate of all PRIME grant funds made available by SBA in any fiscal year. By requesting a waiver, the applicant is implying that, but for the waiver, the proposed programming will not be possible at the levels requested.

(d) An applicant may request a waiver of the matching fund requirement by submitting a written request with its application for funding. The request must justify, and evidence, the need for a waiver. As evidence, the request must include, but is not limited to:

(1) The cause and extent of the constraints on the historical and projected ability to raise matching funds as demonstrated by financial statements and letters of rejection from previous funders and potential new funding sources;

(2) Evidence of efforts to raise match specific to the subject application, including negative responses, and

(3) Based on those efforts, a list of any matching funds expected for the PRIME grant.

(e) Subject to §119.12 (a) through (d), applications will be evaluated on merit before being matched with cost proposals. Any organization requesting a waiver of matching funds, therefore, will not be rejected solely on the basis of such a request.

(f) Applications will be ranked, within their respective categories, from the most to least qualified. The best qualified applicants in each category will be selected whether or not a waiver is requested until the availability of waivers is exhausted.

§ 119.9 How will a qualified organization apply for PRIME grant awards?



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(a) SBA will issue Program Announcements specifying the terms, conditions, and evaluation criteria for each potential set of awards. Program Announcements will summarize the purpose of the available funds; will advise potential applicants regarding how to obtain an application packet; and will provide summary information regarding deadlines and other requirements. Program Announcements may specify any limitations, special rules, procedures, and restrictions for available funding.

(b) Applicants may submit applications in response to the Program Announcements. Each applicant shall submit an application for a grant in accordance with this part and the applicable Program Announcement.

(c) SBA reserves the right to consider at the same time multiple applications from a single applicant when appropriate.

§ 119.10 Will SBA give preferential consideration to other SBA program participants?



In making grants under this part, SBA will not give preferential consideration to an applicant that is a participant in programs established under section 7(m) of the Small Business Act.

§ 119.11 What information will be requested in an application under the PRIME program?



Each application must contain the information and documentation specified in the applicable Program Announcement including, but not limited to, the following items.

(a) For applications seeking Technical Assistance Grants:

- (1) Identifying information and core documentation for the applicant including such items as the applicant's articles of incorporation, by-laws, proof of IRS tax-exempt status, financial statements, and reference contacts.
- (2) A description of past and present activities and technical qualifications of the applicant, including workshops, programs and other technical assistance services, with specific descriptions of the extent to which such services have reached low and very low-income individuals, and the success rates of clients.
- (3) A list of applicant's community partnerships and collaborations with state and local entities, and a description of how such partnerships and collaborations are serving microentrepreneurs.
- (4) A description of the proposed activity for which the applicant will use PRIME grant funds, including training programming plans; a plan for outreach and delivery; applicant's capacity to provide thorough and detailed reports; and a description of the applicant's current data collection and management system, such as computer hardware, software and internet capabilities.
- (5) In the event the applicant is a collaborative, a plan for maintaining internal controls, accountability, and program quality control among the participants of the collaborative.
- (6) Resumes of the personnel that will be administering and managing the proposed activities under the PRIME grant, showing knowledge in such areas as business development, business structures, financial management, and business training and counseling.
- (7) A list of grants received, and/or contracts entered into, that are similar in scope to the subject grant, including name of Federal or other agency providing funding, grant or contract number, and a summary of services provided.

(b) For applicants seeking Capacity Building Grants:

(1) See paragraphs (a)(1), (5), (6) and (7) of this section.

(2) A description of past and present activities and technical qualifications of the applicant, including workshops, programs, operational services, and other technical assistance services, or program development services with specific descriptions of the extent to which such services have improved the operations of client MDOs, assisted client MDOs with operational issues, and assisted client MDOs in reaching low and very low-income individuals.

(3) A description of the proposed activity for which the applicant will use PRIME grant funds, including training programming plans, a plan for outreach and delivery, applicant's capacity to provide thorough and detailed reports; a description of the applicant's current data collection and management system, such as computer hardware, software, and internet capabilities and a description of how these capabilities will or will not be integrated into the training of MDOs.

(c) For applicants seeking Research and Development Grants:

(1) See paragraphs (a)(1), (6), and (7) of this section.

(2) A research proposal indicating the thesis, method(s), scope, duration, and implementation plans (if any).

(3) A description of the expected effect of the research on services to disadvantaged microentrepreneurs.

(d) For applicants seeking Discretionary Grants:

(1) See paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

(2) A description of the proposed activity for which the applicant will use PRIME grant funds, including applicant's capacity to provide thorough and detailed reports, and a description of the applicant's current data collection and management system, such as computer hardware, software and internet capabilities.

§ 119.12 What criteria will SBA use to evaluate applications for funding under the PRIME program?



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During the first year for which funding is available for the PRIME program, SBA will give special consideration to organizations located in and serving areas of, or with a history of successful outreach to, low-income and very low-income persons, to enable the PRIME program to assist those with the

greatest need first. SBA will evaluate applications for funding in accordance with the specific goals of the Act, and as more fully described in the Program Announcements. Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, the following:

(a) Applications for Technical Assistance Grants:

(1) Applicants will compete based on expertise and ability to fulfill the purposes of the Act.

(2) SBA will evaluate organizational structure, financial stability, financial management systems, personnel capacity, and electronic communication capabilities (or potential for same). SBA will also evaluate data collection capabilities, reporting capacities, and ability to account for performance and outcome.

(3) SBA will evaluate the applicant's history of providing technical assistance to low-income and very low-income microentrepreneurs. This factor includes patterns of program growth, client success, outcomes of training, success in establishing new businesses, and success in arranging micro-level financing when the client indicates financing as a goal.

(4) SBA will evaluate the applicant's ability to use community partnerships and collaborations with state and local entities to better serve low-income and very low-income microentrepreneurs.

(b) Applications for Capacity Building Grants:

(1) SBA will evaluate the criteria set forth in paragraph (a)(2) of this section.

(2) SBA will evaluate the applicant's history of providing capacity building services to MDOs, as an indication of the organization's understanding of the goals and purposes of capacity building, its historical effectiveness with the microenterprise development industry, and its ability to provide quality programming to the targeted market. SBA will evaluate patterns of program growth, outcomes of training, types of services provided, delivery systems used, the number and types of clients served, and the successes realized within the client's organizational goals.

(3) SBA will evaluate expected impact on client MDOs; expected impact on services to low-and very-low income microentrepreneurs; and a plan for service and delivery.

(c) Applications for Research and Development Grants:

(1) SBA will evaluate the criteria set forth in paragraph (a)(2) of this section.

(2) SBA will evaluate how the research potentially will enhance microenterprise-oriented technical assistance services to disadvantaged entrepreneurs. Applicants must show the method(s), scope,

duration, and implementation plans of the proposed research.

(3) SBA will evaluate applicant's plan of action incorporating original and secondary research. Applicants must show impact on improved access to microenterprise development services for disadvantaged microentrepreneurs, and the expected replicability/transferability of the finished product to the field.

(d) Applications for Discretionary Grants will be evaluated based on the goals and the viability of the project.

§ 119.13 How will an applicant make a subgrant?



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(a) An applicant that wants to make subgrants using PRIME grant funds must receive written approval from SBA prior to making subgrants. The applicant must identify the subgrantee(s) and describe in detail what the subgrantee(s) will do to help the grantee implement its proposal. An applicant must submit information to SBA demonstrating that, through the subgrantee(s), the grantee's program will:

(1) Provide expanded services to the community,

(2) Provide a method by which one or more previously unserved communities will gain access to the program, or

(3) Provide other specific benefits to the clients, such as specialized training, expanded schedules of operation, or other benefits.

(b) If an applicant has identified potential subgrantee(s) at the time it submits an application for a PRIME grant, the applicant must include the information requested in paragraph (a) of this section in the application. Otherwise, the applicant or grantee may submit the requested information at such time that approvals for subgrantee(s) are requested.

(c) A grantee may not use more than 7.5 percent of the assistance received under its PRIME grant for administrative expenses in connection with the making of subgrants.

§ 119.14 Are there limitations regarding the use of program income?



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Program income, as defined in OMB Circular A-110, may only be used to further PRIME program

objectives. As such, fees collected from clients, and other program income as defined, may be used to help fund the matching requirement. All program income, as defined, shall be reported on financial reports submitted to SBA and added to funds committed to the project by SBA and the recipient organization. However, any interest earned in excess of the maximum allowable amount as specified in the OMB circular incorporated into the grant must be returned to the Federal Government by the grantee.

§ 119.15 If a grantee is unable to spend the entire amount allotted for a single fiscal year, can the funds be carried over to the next year?



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(a) The grantee may request approval to use unexpended funds in the next budget period. This is permissible if funds are to be used for a non-severable, non-recurring project or activity within the scope of the PRIME program. Non-severable means a project in its entirety that cannot be subdivided. The request for using unexpended funds in the next budget period must include the following:

(1) SF 424, budget pages, and justification;

(2) Explanation of why the funds were not expended during the period in which they were awarded; and

(3) Evidence of match. The match requirement for funds carried over to the next budget period can be met by using any excess of matching funds from the current budget period, new matching funds, or a combination of both.

(b) The request must be made no later than 60 days before the end of the budget/project period or the de-obligation process will begin. Approved requests will require the issuance of a revised Notice of Award. Expenditures for funds carried over to the next budget period must be tracked separately.

§ 119.16 What are the reporting, record keeping, and related requirements for grantees?



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A grantee must keep records and meet the other requirements of section 115 of the Riegle Community Development and Regulatory Improvement Act of 1994 (Riegle Act), as if it were a community development financial institution. (See 12 U.S.C. 4714). In addition to meeting requirements of the Riegle Act, a grantee must also maintain data allowing it to measure the impact of services provided by it and any subgrantees, and, if specifically required by the terms of the PRIME grant, measure the success rate of individual clients whom the grantees assist. SBA will detail such requirements in its Program Announcements.

§ 119.17 What types of oversight will SBA provide to grantees?



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(a) In addition to reports required under the Riegle Act, SBA will require reports in accordance with applicable OMB circulars. Such reports will include the following information:

(1) For recipients of Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Grants, for the first two years of receiving grant funding, narrative performance reports and financial status reports will be required quarterly within 15 calendar days of the end of each quarter. Thereafter, grantees may request that SBA reduce the frequency of reports from quarterly to semi-annually. The frequency of reporting then will be determined at the discretion of SBA. In addition, details of expenditures will be required with each request for payment. Grantees will be required to submit audited financial statements on an annual basis, if available, or annual financial statements prepared by a licensed, independent public accountant, within 120 calendar days of the end of the grantee's fiscal year.

(2) For recipients of Research and Development Grants, reports will be required in accordance with agreed upon milestones and as part of the disbursement process.

(3) For recipients of Discretionary Grants, reports will be required as appropriate for the project, or on a schedule as described in paragraph(a)(1) of this section, whichever is more frequent.

(b) In addition, SBA may, from time to time, make site visits to the grantee, and review all applicable books and records.

§ 119.18 What are the restrictions against lobbying?



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No assistance made available under the PRIME program may be expended by a grantee or subgrantee to pay any person to influence, or attempt to influence, any agency, elected official, officer, or employee of a Federal, State, or local government in connection with its participation in the program.

§ 119.19 Is fundraising an allowable expense under the PRIME program?



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Expenditures of grant funds for fundraising activities are not allowable costs under this program. Applicants must be able to raise matching funds without the assistance of grant funds. Unless the full requirement for matching funds is waived, the applicant must demonstrate that it has adequate

fundraising resources to obtain the required non-Federal matching funds to perform the project.

§ 119.20 Should grantees and subgrantees raise conflict of interest matters with SBA?



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Each grantee or subgrantee must provide SBA with a copy of its conflicts of interest policies prior to receipt of funding under the program. Such policies must clearly describe the grantee's or subgrantee's protections from conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof in the handling of grant funding and program provision under this program.

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