

American society, not in other countries; and

(iii) Negative impact on entry into or advancement in the business world because of the disadvantage. SBA will consider any relevant evidence in assessing this element. In every case, however, SBA will consider education, employment and business history, where applicable, to see if the totality of circumstances shows disadvantage in entering into or advancing in the business world.

(A) *Education.* SBA considers such factors as denial of equal access to institutions of higher education, exclusion from social and professional association with students or teachers, denial of educational honors rightfully earned, and social patterns or pressures which discouraged the individual from pursuing a professional or business education.

(B) *Employment.* SBA considers such factors as unequal treatment in hiring, promotions and other aspects of professional advancement, pay and fringe benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment; retaliatory or discriminatory behavior by an employer; and social patterns or pressures which have channeled the individual into nonprofessional or non-business fields.

(C) *Business history.* SBA considers such factors as unequal access to credit or capital, acquisition of credit or capital under commercially unfavorable circumstances, unequal treatment in opportunities for government contracts or other work, unequal treatment by potential customers and business associates, and exclusion from business or professional organizations.

(d) *Socially disadvantaged group inclusion*—(1) *General.* Representatives of an identifiable group whose members believe that the group has suffered chronic racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias may petition SBA to be included as a presumptively socially disadvantaged group under paragraph (b)(1) of this section. Upon presentation of substantial evidence that members of the group have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias because of their identity as group members and without regard to their individual qualities, SBA will publish a no-

tice in the FEDERAL REGISTER that it has received and is considering such a request, and that it will consider public comments.

(2) *Standards to be applied.* In determining whether a group has made an adequate showing that it has suffered chronic racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias for the purposes of this section, SBA must determine that:

(i) The group has suffered prejudice, bias, or discriminatory practices;

(ii) Those conditions have resulted in economic deprivation for the group of the type which Congress has found exists for the groups named in the Small Business Act; and

(iii) Those conditions have produced impediments in the business world for members of the group over which they have no control and which are not common to small business owners generally.

(3) *Procedure.* The notice published under paragraph (d)(1) of this section will authorize a specified period for the receipt of public comments supporting or opposing the petition for socially disadvantaged group status. If appropriate, SBA may hold hearings. SBA may also conduct its own research relative to the group's petition.

(4) *Decision.* In making a final decision that a group should be considered presumptively disadvantaged, SBA must find that a preponderance of the evidence demonstrates that the group has met the standards set forth in paragraph (d)(2) of this section based on SBA's consideration of the group petition, the comments from the public, and any independent research it performs. SBA will advise the petitioners of its final decision in writing, and publish its conclusion as a notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER. If appropriate, SBA will amend paragraph (b)(1) of this section to include a new group.

[63 FR 35739, June 30, 1998, as amended at 74 FR 45753, Sept. 4, 2009; 76 FR 8254, Feb. 11, 2011]

§ 124.104 Who is economically disadvantaged?

(a) *General.* Economically disadvantaged individuals are socially disadvantaged individuals 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 same or similar line of business who are not socially disadvantaged.

(b) *Submission of narrative and financial information.* (1) Each individual claiming economic disadvantage must describe it in a narrative statement, and must submit personal financial information.

(2) When married, an individual claiming economic disadvantage must submit separate financial information for his or her spouse, unless the individual and the spouse are legally separated. SBA will consider a spouse's financial situation in determining an individual's access to credit and capital where the spouse has a role in the business (e.g., an officer, employee or director) or has lent money to, provided credit support to, or guaranteed a loan of the business. SBA does not take into consideration community property laws when determining economic disadvantage.

(c) *Factors to be considered.* In considering diminished capital and credit opportunities, SBA will examine factors relating to the personal financial condition of any individual claiming disadvantaged status, including income for the past three years (including bonuses and the value of company stock received in lieu of cash), personal net worth, and the fair market value of all assets, whether encumbered or not. An individual who exceeds any one of the thresholds set forth in this paragraph for personal income, net worth or total assets will generally be deemed to have access to credit and capital and not economically disadvantaged.

(1) *Transfers within two years.* (i) Except as set forth in paragraph (c)(1)(ii) of this section, SBA will attribute to an individual claiming disadvantaged status any assets which that individual has transferred to an immediate family member, or to a trust a beneficiary of which is an immediate family member, for less than fair market value, within two years prior to a concern's application for participation in the 8(a) BD program or within two years of a Participant's annual program review, unless the individual claiming disadvantaged status can demonstrate that the

transfer is to or on behalf of an immediate family member for that individual's education, medical expenses, or some other form of essential support.

(ii) SBA will not attribute to an individual claiming disadvantaged status any assets transferred by that individual to an immediate family member that are consistent with the customary recognition of special occasions, such as birthdays, graduations, anniversaries, and retirements.

(iii) In determining an individual's access to capital and credit, SBA may consider any assets that the individual transferred within such two-year period described by paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section that SBA does not consider in evaluating the individual's assets and net worth (e.g., transfers to charities).

(2) *Net worth.* For initial 8(a) BD eligibility, the net worth of an individual claiming disadvantage must be less than \$250,000. For continued 8(a) BD eligibility after admission to the program, net worth must be less than \$750,000. In determining such net worth, SBA will exclude the ownership interest in the applicant or Participant and the equity in the primary personal residence (except any portion of such equity which is attributable to excessive withdrawals from the applicant or Participant). Exclusions for net worth purposes are not exclusions for asset valuation or access to capital and credit purposes.

(i) A contingent liability does not reduce an individual's net worth.

(ii) Funds invested in an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) or other official retirement account that are unavailable to an individual until retirement age without a significant penalty will not be considered in determining an individual's net worth. In order to properly assess whether funds invested in a retirement account may be excluded from an individual's net worth, the individual must provide information about the terms and restrictions of the account to SBA and certify that the retirement account is legitimate.

(iii) Income received from an applicant or Participant that is an S corporation, limited liability company (LLC) or partnership will be excluded from an individual's net worth where

the applicant or Participant provides documentary evidence demonstrating that the income was reinvested in the firm or used to pay taxes arising in the normal course of operations of the firm. Losses from the S corporation, LLC or partnership, however, are losses to the company only, not losses to the individual, and cannot be used to reduce an individual's net worth.

(iv) The personal net worth of an individual claiming to be an Alaska Native will include assets and income from sources other than an Alaska Native Corporation and exclude any of the following which the individual receives from any Alaska Native Corporation: cash (including cash dividends on stock received from an ANC) to the extent that it does not, in the aggregate, exceed \$2,000 per individual per annum; stock (including stock issued or distributed by an ANC as a dividend or distribution on stock); a partnership interest; land or an interest in land (including land or an interest in land received from an ANC as a dividend or distribution on stock); and an interest in a settlement trust.

(3) *Personal income for the past three years.* (i) If an individual's adjusted gross income averaged over the three years preceding submission of the 8(a) application exceeds \$250,000, SBA will presume that such individual is not economically disadvantaged. For continued 8(a) BD eligibility, SBA will presume that an individual is not economically disadvantaged if his or her adjusted gross income averaged over the three preceding years exceeds \$350,000. The presumption may be rebutted by a showing that this income level was unusual and not likely to occur in the future, that losses commensurate with and directly related to the earnings were suffered, or by evidence that the income is not indicative of lack of economic disadvantage.

(ii) Income received from an applicant or Participant that is an S corporation, LLC or partnership will be excluded from an individual's income where the applicant or Participant provides documentary evidence demonstrating that the income was reinvested in the firm or used to pay taxes arising in the normal course of operations of the firm. Losses from the S

corporation, LLC or partnership, however, are losses to the company only, not losses to the individual, and cannot be used to reduce an individual's personal income.

(4) *Fair market value of all assets.* An individual will generally not be considered economically disadvantaged if the fair market value of all his or her assets (including his or her primary residence and the value of the applicant/Participant firm) exceeds \$4 million for an applicant concern and \$6 million for continued 8(a) BD eligibility. The only assets excluded from this determination are funds excluded under paragraph (c)(2)(ii) of this section as being invested in a qualified IRA account.

[63 FR 35739, June 30, 1998, as amended at 76 FR 8254, Feb. 11, 2011]

§ 124.105 What does it mean to be unconditionally owned by one or more disadvantaged individuals?

An applicant or Participant must be at least 51 percent unconditionally and directly owned by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged individuals who are citizens of the United States, except for concerns owned by Indian tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, Native Hawaiian Organizations, or Community Development Corporations (CDCs). See § 124.3 for definition of unconditional ownership; and §§ 124.109, 124.110, and 124.111, respectively, for special ownership requirements for concerns owned by Indian tribes, ANCs, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and CDCs.

(a) *Ownership must be direct.* Ownership by one or more disadvantaged individuals must be direct ownership. An applicant or Participant owned principally by another business entity or by a trust (including employee stock ownership trusts) that is in turn owned and controlled by one or more disadvantaged individuals does not meet this requirement. However, ownership by a trust, such as a living trust, may be treated as the functional equivalent of ownership by a disadvantaged individual where the trust is revocable, and the disadvantaged individual is the grantor, a trustee, and the sole current beneficiary of the trust.