

The 8(a) Business Development Program was created by Congress because discrimination has been a barrier for many American business owners now and in the past.

Eligibility for the program

The program defines “social disadvantage” as experiencing discrimination in the United States because of characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, long-term residence in a socially isolated community, or others. And, the social disadvantage must stem from circumstances beyond a business owner’s control.

Experiences that have affected your professional or business growth

To determine if you’re eligible for the program, describe experiences when discrimination based on your identity affected the opportunities you had to advance your educational or professional career, or to create or expand your business.

Each owner of your business who has experienced social disadvantage must describe at least two experiences, but is welcome to share more than two.

We know that it may be difficult to write about what you’ve experienced. Take your time as you describe the details, just remember to save your work every 30 minutes.

Situation 1

First, think of a situation that has affected opportunities in your educational or your professional career, or to create or expand your business because of your race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, presence in a socially isolated community, or another characteristic.

The situation may have happened recently or a long time ago.

Next, answer the following questions to help us understand exactly what happened. Only describe situations that happened in the United States, including U.S. territories and military bases.

1. What happened?

As a reminder, describe a situation that has affected opportunities in your educational or your professional career, or to create or expand your business. Your answer must describe the action and the reasons why you believe it was discriminatory based on your identity.

2. How did this situation affect opportunities to start or expand your business?

Describe the effect of the discriminatory action (e.g., Because X happened, it affected an opportunity for me to do Y because of [reason]).

3. Which of the following contributed to the discrimination in the situation? Check all that apply. A brief text response is required for any box checked.

Race

Ethnicity

Sex

Gender identity

Sexual orientation

Identifiable Disability

Religion

Long-term residence in a socially isolated community

Something else that describes my identity, but isn't listed here

4. When did it happen?

Based on what you remember, include a time period (e.g., spring semester in second year of college), season and year (e.g., Spring 2015), or exact date (e.g. May 15, 2015). Be as specific as possible.

5. Where did it happen?

Include the specific place where it happened and the city and state/territory (e.g., Name of bank in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania or job training program in San Juan, Puerto Rico). As a reminder, the location must be in the United States, including U.S. territories and military bases.

6. Who contributed to the discrimination?

Include the people and/or organizations who took discriminatory action. It may have been one person or multiple people. Based on what you remember, include each person's role (e.g., career advisor or loan officer) or exact name to the extent possible. Any names that you provide are confidential and we will not contact the person for any reason.