



## **2019 POLICY PRIORITIES**

Women's Business Centers (WBCs) serve more than 145,000 entrepreneurs each year, providing training and one-on-one counseling nationwide. To serve the growing demand for services, the WBC program expanded from only four centers 30 years ago to 114 centers operating more than 150 training locations today. The program, however, needs modernization, streamlined reporting requirements and additional resources. The 116<sup>th</sup> Congress must support women-owned businesses:

### **MODERNIZE THE WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER PROGRAM**

Bipartisan legislation that modernizes the WBC program and brings it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century is needed. Congress should pass legislation with key changes to WBCs nationwide:

- ✓ Re-authorize the program to include an accreditation process that ensures the integrity of the program and participating organizations;
- ✓ Increase individual grant level to allow established and effective centers to leverage additional resources for greater impact, and facilitate an expansion of services to serve more constituencies including rural communities;
- ✓ Provide financial flexibility for WBCs to raise additional funds from the private and philanthropic sectors; and allow for improved Small Business Administration (SBA) collaboration with WBCs and their association.

### **INCREASE FUNDING FOR WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTERS**

Our centers leverage federal dollars into more than \$50 million for entrepreneurial programming. The return on federal investment is \$46 for every \$1 of taxpayer dollars. Increased federal funding will maximize the impact of WBCs. If reauthorized, the program requires additional resources, and as such, for Fiscal Year 2020, we urge Congress to appropriate \$30 million.

In addition, AWBC requests funding be appropriated for technical assistance grants for WBCs in federally declared disaster areas to provide support to get women-owned businesses back on their feet. Resources are also needed to create an accreditation program for WBCs. AWBC will use these resources to establish and implement evaluation criteria for accreditation, ensuring quality and promoting center improvements.

### **DECREASE REGULATORY BURDEN ON CENTERS**

SBA reporting requirements for WBCs have spiraled well beyond their original intent, turning dedicated non-profit counselors into fulltime bookkeepers. Fortunately, in 2018 the SBA made progress in easing this paperwork burden and streamlining reporting requirements for centers, but statutory changes are needed.

***About AWBC:** The Association of Women's Business Centers ([www.awbc.org](http://www.awbc.org)) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1998 to support the national network of Women's Business Centers (WBCs) with programming and advocacy.*