

Governor Blanco, LRA, LED and OCD Launch Next Wave of Business Assistance

Firms Invited to Submit Proposals to Administer the Assistance

BATON ROUGE, La. (October 23, 2006) - Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, the Louisiana Recovery Authority, Louisiana Economic Development, and Office of Community Development today launched the Small Firm Recovery Loan and Grant (SFLG) Program and the Technical Assistance (TA) to Small Firms Program, the next phase of a broad package of direct assistance to businesses impacted by hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The programs are designed to stabilize and invigorate thousands of businesses and non-profit agencies in storm-affected areas by providing low-cost financing, as well as strategic planning, marketing, legal and other technical assistance small businesses need to thrive in a post-hurricane environment.

The \$38 million loan and grant program and \$9.5 million technical assistance program are among \$332.5 in federal hurricane recovery (Community Development Block Grant) funds that Blanco, the LRA, and the Legislature have committed to economic recovery. Other programs launched in recent weeks provide workforce training and small-business bridge loans.

"We want to do everything in our power to help businesses bounce back stronger after the storms. Of course that means financing, but it also means getting the technical help they need to change their approach to business. It's a different world post-Katrina and Rita, but our businesses can adapt if given the proper guidance and support," Blanco said.

The state issued Solicitations for Grant Applications from nonprofits, Community Development Financial Institutions and others seeking to act as intermediaries to provide loans, grants, and technical assistance to small companies and nonprofits. The solicitations are due December 1, 2006. [Click here](#) to view them. Small businesses and nonprofits are expected to be able to access the services by early January 2007.

The Small Firm Recovery Loan and Grant Program is modeled after a similar program used in New York after 9-11. It focuses on small firms, including nonprofits, that contribute to the economy and maintain and create jobs, but that may not qualify for bank and/or SBA loans.

The Technical Assistance program is aimed at the many small, locally-owned firms in Southeast and Southwest Louisiana that were seriously affected by the storms, continue to be impacted by the lower population and dearth of tourists in the regions, and contribute to the character of the region in which they are located. It is also designed to serve entrepreneurs and individuals seeking to start new businesses in the affected areas.

For questions about the programs, contact Robin Keegan of the LRA at robin.keegan@la.gov or (225) 342- 1731.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated South Louisiana, killing 1,464 people and destroying more than 200,000 homes and 18,000 businesses.