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MEDIA RELEASE
March 16, 2004

RELEASE MARCH 16, 2004

**Governor Announces Prestigious National “T” Designation
For Maine Small Business Development Centers**

AUGUSTA, MAINE – Governor John E. Baldacci announced today that the Maine Small Business Development Centers (Maine SBDC) have met a rigorous national accreditation authorizing them to formally provide technology support to Maine’s 37,000 small and micro businesses and 100,000 independent workers. Maine SBDC is only the fourth SBDC program in four years of the national technology accreditation process to earn the “*T*” designation from the Association of Small Business Development Centers, joining North Carolina, Ohio, and Michigan as Small Business & Technology Development Centers (SBTCD).

The Governor called the “T” designation “evidence that Maine is at the forefront of the nation in efforts to develop new technology and to provide critical technology commercialization support to small businesses.” He called the technology services of Maine SBDC a “significant addition to Maine’s resources to assist would-be technology entrepreneurs – be they high tech, such as bio-tech, or re-working technologies in Maine’s traditional sectors such as agriculture.”

The Association of Small Business Development Centers (ASBDC) accreditation team that evaluated Maine reported in its written comments “The Maine SBDC has worked very deliberately and diligently to develop and integrate their technology efforts into existing programs.”

“Maine SBDC has been helping Maine’s small businesses succeed for over 25 years,” said Maine SBDC/SBTDC State Director John Massaua, adding, “Those existing programs which have been serving Maine’s small business community have not disappeared with the “T”, but they will be enhanced as the result of the new “T” designation.” Massaua said his organization, headquartered at the University of Southern Maine, will integrate technology-focused capabilities into all of its 11 service centers and 25 outreach offices throughout Maine. Those capabilities include strategic technology planning, technology marketing strategies, funding and capitalization work, technology licensing strategies, and partnership development. However, to ensure that its image as a resource for *all* small business needs is not lost, only a certain number of its locations will be called “Maine Small Business & Technology Development Centers.”

Principally, the Maine SBDC location in Gardiner, where a two-year-old collaboration with Maine Technology Institute (MTI) was instrumental in helping Maine SBDC earn its “T” designation, will be termed an SBTDC. MTI, under the direction of Dr. Janet Yancey-Wrona, hosts the Maine SBDC Gardiner location. Both organizations collaborate extensively on technology-intensive small businesses. Maine SBDC at MTI, now Maine SBDTC at MTI, helps clients with the business planning necessary to apply for or utilize MTI funding.

MTI, a nonprofit created by the Maine legislature in 1999 to provide seed investment and development grants to private businesses, increasing research and development and job creation, was instrumental in assisting the Maine SBDC reach its goal of “T” designation through its extensive support of the Maine SBDC’s technology focus. “The MTI collaboration was the beginning of the Maine SBDC’s effort to achieve the “T” designation,” according to Massaua. “Other collaborations include a partnership with Maine’s Applied Technology Development Centers (ATDC),” he explained. Maine SBDC is training ATDC executive directors as *authorized associate SBTDC business counselors*. ATDC is a system of seven business incubators established to accelerate the early-stage development of technology-based companies through continual and focused business assistance. Each will be designated outreach offices of the Maine SBTDC.

“Aside from capacity-building, we also undertook strategic planning, funding enhancement, core competency, partnering, and work-plan achievement to reach this important goal,” said Meriby Sweet, newly designated Maine SBTDC Center Director. “These efforts have not only been reviewed by the ASBDC Accreditation Team but also the Maine SBA District Office, the Maine Small Business Commission, the Board of Director’s for the Maine Technology Institute and other interested stakeholders such as the University of Maine and the University of Southern Maine’s technology-commercialization initiators,” she noted.

The Maine SBDC “T” designation follows the recent national accreditation of its basic counseling services. That accreditation was earned after an intensive, congressionally-mandated, week-long program review of Maine SBDC. The review, which takes place every four years, is based on the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Criteria and was conducted for Maine in November, 2003, by three SBDC peer reviewers and the Associate Administrator, Office of SBDCs – U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

Maine SBDC celebrated 25 years of service to Maine’s small business community in 2002, the same year it was honored with the Margaret Chase Smith State Quality Award. In 2003, Maine SBDC assisted over 2600 existing or emerging small business owner/operators through one-on-one business counseling and an additional 2800 clients through workshops and training activities. Maine SBDC also provided information to over 3000 non-registered clients, and recorded 530 jobs created and/or retained, helped secure 23 million dollars in capital for Maine businesses, and achieved a 96% client satisfaction rating.

About Maine Small Business Development Centers (Maine SBDC)/Small Business & Technology Centers (Maine SBTDC): *Maine SBDC/SBTDC is a partnership program of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) in association with the SBA/SNDC, Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (Maine DECD), the University of Southern Maine (USM), and leading economic and/or community development hosting organizations, including the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG), Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI), Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), and the Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC); with support from the Maine Technology Institute (MTI), the University of Maine (UMaine), and other contractors, allies and stakeholders.*

Accredited by the Association of Small Business Development Centers (ASBDC) and administered by USM's School of Business, Maine SBDC/SBTDC operates a network of 11 service centers and 25 outreach offices located conveniently throughout the state. Maine SBDC/SBTDC provides comprehensive business management assistance, training, resource and information services to Maine's micro, small, and technology-based business communities.

Maine SBDC/SBTDC's mission is to engage itself and others in development activities that contribute to the improvement of the economic climate for and the success of micro, small, and technology-based businesses in the State of Maine. Its focus is to assist in the creation, growth and maintenance of viable small businesses and the jobs these businesses provide. Maine SBDC/SBTDC serves those seeking assistance who are willing and able to build, sustain, and/or expand their business.

More information about the Maine SBDC/SBTDC can be found at www.mainesbdc.org.