



Ron Phillips, President of CEI, with SBA District Director Mary McAleney and Maine SBDC Director John Massau

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New Alliance Helps Women Business Owners

Freeport Maine: Maine Small Business Development Centers (Maine SBDC), headquartered at the University of Southern Maine, and the Women's Business Center at CEI (WBC) launched a strategic alliance today to strengthen business technical assistance to Maine's small business community, particularly women-owned businesses. The alliance was sealed at a Memorandum of Agreement signing ceremony between the two organizations at Coastal Enterprises, Inc.'s (CEI) annual meeting in Freeport.

Both the Maine SBDC and the WBC are resource partners of the United States Small Business Administration (SBA) and provide counseling and training to Maine's micro and small businesses. "This strategic alliance leverages the expertise of both the WBC and Maine SBDC and builds upon the systems, technologies and protocol of the Maine SBDC to better serve Maine's small businesses," said Mary McAleney, SBA Maine District Director.

Ron Phillips, President of CEI, added, "CEI, which hosts the Women's Business Center, is pleased and honored to participate in a formal agreement which codifies and strengthens what has been already a positive and beneficial, cooperative working relationship for a number of years between our two organizations."

Under the three-year strategic alliance, the Maine SBDC and the WBC will collaborate to offer training workshops, seminars, and programs tailored to women-owned businesses and others as appropriate; promote and facilitate awareness of each other's services, and mutually seek funding opportunities to support joint projects and services for women-owned businesses through statewide programming.

The Maine SBDC will also provide ongoing counselor training and certification to WBC counselors, access to the Maine SBDC database to track client activity and the interaction of the WBC/Maine SBDC counselors, and access to Maine SBDC operational and training technologies and business counseling tools, and assist, as appropriate, in the management of the WBC. The WBC will furnish training and support to the Maine SBDC on the uniqueness of women business owners and how to best assist them.

"There is a growing need for Maine's service providers to be synergistic when it comes to delivering support for Maine's small businesses," said John Massau, Maine SBDC State Director, adding "This agreement recognizes women as the important

contributors to Maine's economy that they are and it allows the Maine SBDC and WBC to better institutionalize services for women-owned businesses."

About Maine Small Business Development Centers: Maine Small Business Development Centers (Maine SBDC) and its tech-focus group, Maine Small Business & Technology Development Centers (Maine SBTDC) provide comprehensive business management assistance, training, resource and information services to Maine's micro, small and technology-based business communities. Business assistance is provided at no cost to business owners by professional certified business counselors who meet rigorous education and business experience standards.

Maine SBDC/SBTDC is a partnership program of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) in association with the SBA/SBDC, 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 Office of the Provost, Maine SBDC/SBTDC operates a network of 11 service centers and 25 outreach offices located conveniently throughout the state. More information about the Maine SBDC/SBTDC can be found at www.mainesbdc.org.

About The Women's Business Center at CEI: The Women's Business Center(WBC) at CEI provides workshops, counseling, networking opportunities, Internet/websites workshops, and assistance in obtaining financing to new and existing women-owned businesses in Maine. Coastal Enterprises, Inc (CEI), administers the program directly for the State of Maine. WBC is a joint venture with the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Women's Business Ownership (OWBO). The OWBO is the only office in the federal government established to help women become full partners in economic development through small business ownership. More information about CEI and its Women's Business Center can be found at www.wbcmaine.org .