The center is housed at the offices of the Greater Cleveland Partnership at 1240 Huron Road in downtown
Cleveland
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By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

Cleveland is the home of the U.S. Commerce Department's Minority Business Development Agency's (MBDA) newest business center. On Thursday, Sept. 1, more than 250 people turned out for the Cleveland MBDA Business Center's grand opening and press conference held at the Wyndham Hotel.

The Commission on Economic Inclusion today accepted an oversized $1.125 million check from the federal Minority Business Development Agency to kick off a local MBDA Business Center. The center will help minority businesses across Ohio raise capital and secure contracts with larger private companies and public agencies.

The program consisted of U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Congresswoman Marcia Fudge, (D-Ohio) who delivered remarks; and Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson presented a proclamation to Carmen West recognizing the center's role in the city.

MBDA National Director David Hinson delivered remarks to the crowd, challenging business owners to take advantage of the new opportunities that will be available through the business center in creating access to capital, contracts and markets.

The $1,125,000 five-year federal grant check was presented to center operator Andrew Jackson, Senior V. P. and Executive Director of the Commission on Economic Inclusion, Greater Cleveland Partnership (GCP).

Andrew Jackson said the local center's goal for its first year is to help 60 minority businesses win contracts that create $20 million in new business and to create at least two new export connections for minority businesses.

The center is housed at the offices of the Greater Cleveland Partnership at 1240 Huron Road in downtown Cleveland. The inclusion commission is a program of GCP.

Following the open house and tour of the center, a select group of minority business owners and key economic development stakeholders were invited to a White House Business Roundtable, where business owners shared in a candid conversation about their issues and concerns.

Director Hinson challenged business owners to consider what their companies specifically need

to create "one more job." As National Director of the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), Mr. Hinson oversees a national operation of five regional offices and 48 minority business centers.

This operation expands the U.S. economy and creates new jobs by providing services to promote the growth and global competitiveness of minority businesses. Since the start of the Obama Administration, this operation has assisted minority-owned firms in obtaining nearly $7 billion in contracts and capital, creating nearly 11,000 new jobs.

Mr. Hinson received an MBA in finance from The University of Pennsylvania Wharton School, and a bachelor's degree in insurance and finance with honors from Howard University in Washington, DC. In addition, he completed a fellowship in international finance with honors from the Stockholm School of Economics and graduate-level studies in French with honors at the University of Abidjan, in Ivory Coast, West Africa.

MBDA Business Centers assist minority entrepreneurs with strategic business consulting services. Centers work directly with minority business owners and managers at the local level and provide enhanced assistance through MBDA's national strategic partners, both within the federal government and the private sector.

The local office will be connected to a national network of business centers that will allow Ohio minority businesses to tap into leads generated at the other 48 centers nationwide. In turn, the local office will encourage larger local businesses to share their contracting opportunities with minority businesses across the country.