§ 124.104 Who is economically disadvantaged?

(a) General. Economically disadvantaged individuals are socially disadvantaged individuals whose ability to compete in the free enterprise system has been impaired due to diminished capital and credit opportunities as compared to others in the same or similar line of business who are not socially disadvantaged.

(b) Submission of narrative and financial information. (1) Each individual claiming economic disadvantage must describe it in a narrative statement, and must submit personal financial information.

(2) When married, an individual claiming economic disadvantage must submit separate financial information for his or her spouse, unless the individual and the spouse are legally separated. SBA will consider a spouse’s financial situation in determining an individual’s access to credit and capital where the spouse has a role in the business (e.g., an officer, employee or director) or has lent money to, provided credit support to, or guaranteed a loan of the business. SBA does not take into consideration community property laws when determining economic disadvantage.

(c) Factors to be considered. In considering diminished capital and credit opportunities, SBA will examine factors relating to the personal financial condition of any individual claiming disadvantaged status, including income for the past three years (including bonuses and the value of company stock received in lieu of cash), personal net worth, and the fair market value of all assets, whether encumbered or not. An individual who exceeds any one of the thresholds set forth in this paragraph for personal income, net worth or total assets will generally be deemed to have access to credit and capital and not economically disadvantaged.

(i) Transfers within two years. (i) Except as set forth in paragraph (c)(1)(ii) of this section, SBA will attribute to an individual claiming disadvantaged status any assets transferred within such two-year period to or on behalf of an immediate family member for that individual’s education, medical expenses, or some other form of essential support.

(ii) SBA will not attribute to an individual claiming disadvantaged status any assets transferred by that individual to an immediate family member that are consistent with the customary recognition of special occasions, such as birthdays, graduations, anniversaries, and retirements.

(iii) In determining an individual’s access to capital and credit, SBA may consider any assets that the individual transferred within such two-year period described by paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section that SBA does not consider in evaluating the individual’s assets and net worth (e.g., transfers to charities).

(ii) Net worth. For initial 8(a) BD eligibility, the net worth of an individual claiming disadvantage must be less than $250,000. For continued 8(a) BD eligibility after admission to the program, net worth must be less than $750,000. In determining such net worth, SBA will exclude the ownership interest in the applicant or Participant and the equity in the primary personal residence (except any portion of such equity which is attributable to excessive withdrawals from the applicant or Participant). Exclusions for net worth purposes are not exclusions for asset valuation or access to capital and credit purposes.

(i) A contingent liability does not reduce an individual’s net worth.

(ii) Funds invested in an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) or other official retirement account that are unavailable to an individual until retirement age without a significant penalty will not be considered in determining an individual’s net worth. In order to properly assess whether funds invested in a retirement account may be excluded from an individual’s net worth, the individual must provide information about the terms and restrictions two years prior to a concern’s application for participation in the 8(a) BD program or within two years of a Participant’s annual program review, unless the individual claiming disadvantaged status can demonstrate that the transfer is to or on behalf of an immediate family member for that individual’s education, medical expenses, or some other form of essential support.
§ 124.105 What does it mean to be unconditionally owned by one or more disadvantaged individuals?

An applicant or Participant must be at least 51 percent unconditionally and directly owned by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged individuals who are citizens of the United States, except for concerns owned by Indian tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, Native Hawaiian Organizations, or Community Development Corporations (CDCs). See §124.3 for definition of unconditional ownership; and §§124.109, 124.110, and 124.111, respectively, for special ownership requirements for concerns owned by Indian tribes, ANCs, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and CDCs.

(a) Ownership must be direct. Ownership by one or more disadvantaged individuals must be direct ownership. An applicant or Participant owned principally by another business entity or by a trust (including employee stock ownership trusts) that is in turn owned and controlled by one or more disadvantaged individuals does not meet this requirement. However, ownership by a trust, such as a living trust, may be treated as the functional equivalent of unconditional ownership.

§ 124.105 Personal income for the past three years.

(i) If an individual's adjusted gross income averaged over the three years preceding submission of the 8(a) application exceeds $250,000, SBA will presume that such individual is not economically disadvantaged. For continued 8(a) BD eligibility, SBA will presume that an individual is not economically disadvantaged if his or her adjusted gross income averaged over the three preceding years exceeds $350,000. The presumption may be rebutted by a showing that this income level was unusual and not likely to occur in the future, that losses commensurate with and directly related to the earnings were suffered, or by evidence that the income is not indicative of lack of economic disadvantage.

(ii) Income received from an applicant or Participant that is an S corporation, LLC or partnership will be excluded from an individual's income where the applicant or Participant provides documentary evidence demonstrating that the income was reinvested in the firm or used to pay taxes arising in the normal course of operations of the firm. Losses from the S corporation, LLC or partnership, however, are losses to the company only, not losses to the individual, and cannot be used to reduce an individual's personal income.

(4) Fair market value of all assets. An individual will generally not be considered economically disadvantaged if the fair market value of all his or her assets (including his or her primary residence and the value of the applicant/Participant firm) exceeds $4 million for an applicant concern and $6 million for continued 8(a) BD eligibility. The only assets excluded from this determination are funds excluded under paragraph (c)(2)(ii) of this section as being invested in a qualified IRA account.