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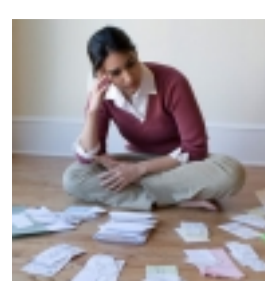
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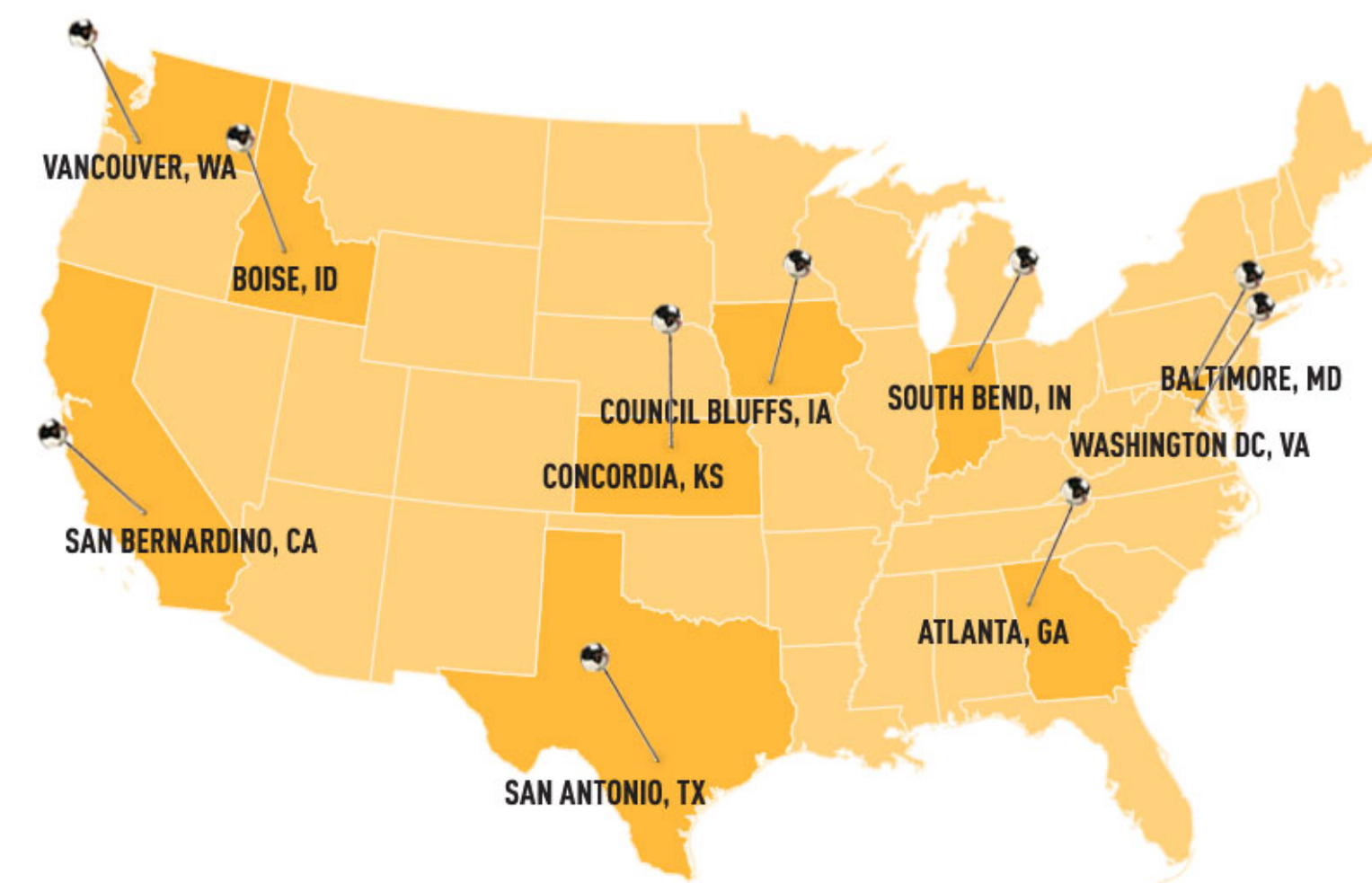
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America's 10 Most Helpful SBDCs

Here are the centers that stand out as the most active and influential small business development centers across the country—providing exceptional support for their local entrepreneurial communities.

By [Tiffany Black](#), [Lou Dubois](#) and [Venuri Siriwardane](#) | @minnie6998 @lou_dubois @venuris | Feb 22, 2011



To read about one of our top SBDCs, click on one of the cities highlighted on this map.

There are more than 900 small business development centers in the United States. Sponsored by the Small Business Association, these centers are often run in partnership with state and local governments, colleges, and the private sector. Counselors are on hand to help an entrepreneur craft a business plan, fill out a loan application, or come up with a winning marketing strategy.

"The SBDCs exist to help entrepreneurs and small business owners obtain capital to support their companies, and make better decisions on key aspects of their business operations," says Antonio Doss, associate administrator for the Office of Small Business Development Centers, a group within the SBA that coordinates the program. "The advisors at the SBDCs work with entrepreneurs to make the necessary adjustments to establish a business that's sustainable and profitable."

SBDCs also assist companies in gaining access to capital—a service that has been particularly crucial of late. In 2009 and again last year, SBDCs nationally helped clients secure funding in excess of \$3.8 billion in the form of debt, equity, and grant money. "It was surprising the amount of support SBDC's were able to get in the area of capital infusion," Doss says. "We expected to see a downturn the last two years but our business advisors were able to help clients get additional money because of the relationships they have in the lending community."

To help identify the most active and innovative SBDCs around the country, a team of Inc.com reporters interviewed 45 entrepreneurs and small business advocates. The centers that stand out provide exceptional support for their local entrepreneurial communities while at the same time they serves as national models for effective small business advocacy.

Have you worked with an SBDC in your area? If so, tell us about your experience by posting on our wall on [Facebook.com/Inc.](#)

An SBDC for First-Time Federal Contractors - Washington, D.C.

The District of Columbia Small Business Development Center prides itself on its ability to help business owners navigate the daunting and complicated road to becoming a federal government contractor. [Read More](#)

An SBDC That Excels at Leadership Training - Atlanta

The Georgia State University Small Business Development Center provides excellent leadership training through the award-winning Kauffman Foundation's FastTrac GrowthVenture program. They have helped hundreds of small business owners become better managers. [Read More](#)

A Local SBDC Sharing Resources Nationally - Boise, Idaho

To help small businesses nationwide—as well as counselors at other SBDCs—the Idaho Small Business Center at Boise State University has built a comprehensive website that links to a variety of helpful resources. [Read More](#)

An SBDC With a Unique Bank Partnership - San Bernardino, California

Located inside of a bank branch, the Inland Empire Small Business Development Center is California's largest SBDC, and one that prides itself on its ability to help clients gain access to capital. [Read More](#)

An SBDC Helping Businesses With Social Media - Council Bluffs, Iowa

The Iowa Western Community College Entrepreneurial & Small Business Development Center is a nexus of social media activity in the heartland. Counselors teach business owners about social media, search engine optimization, and other rapidly changing online marketing strategies. [Read More](#)

An SBDC Focused on University Research - South Bend, Indiana

When the local RV industry fell on hard times, the North Central Indiana Small Business Development Center focused on helping businesses in the region spur innovation. The center's Pre-Seed Workshop is designed to help researchers at the University of Notre Dame commercialize their ideas. [Read More](#)

An SBDC Serving a Largely Rural Territory - Concordia, Kansas

North Central Kansas Small Business Development Center serves 11 counties with a population of about 125,000 people. The SBDC's staff is helping farmers to diversify their revenue streams, bringing together women entrepreneurs, and providing training, mentoring and gap-financing for local businesses. [Read More](#)

An SBDC Helping Businesses to Export - San Antonio

By specializing in facilitating trade relationships across the Mexican border, the San Antonio Small Business Development Center has helped entrepreneurs to generate \$181 million in export-driven sales. [Read More](#)

An SBDC That Focuses on Cash Flow - Vancouver, Washington

Financial literacy for entrepreneurs is at the heart of what Vancouver Small Business Development Center provides its clients. The center's "Profit Mastery" series helps small businesses grapple with cash flow issues; the SBDC also works with business to find angels and other investors. [Read More](#)

An SBDC That Turned Things Around - Baltimore

The Maryland Small Business Development Center, Central Region went from one of the worst performing SBDCs in Maryland to one of the best. A new director helped transform the center in less than a year—and she is just getting started. [Read More](#)

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An SBDC Helping Businesses to Export

The San Antonio Small Business Development Center has been facilitating relationships across the Mexican border.

By Venuri Siriwardane | @venuris | Feb 22, 2011



Courtesy company

Polyglot: The staff of the International Trade Center serves all chapters in the South-West Texas Border SBDC network and employs staffers from China, Mexico, Uruguay, Spain and Argentina.

San Antonio Small Business Development Center

501 West Durango Blvd.,
San Antonio, Texas, 78752
SASBDC Website
210-458-2958
Contact Email

Name of Director:
Morrison Woods

No. of employees: 20

Hours spent with clients:
12,427

Capital Infusion: \$19 million in 2010

What's Noteworthy:
Facilitating relationships across the Mexican border has helped generate \$181 million in exported goods.

San Antonio is growing at a dizzying pace, with a booming population and a lively, diversified economy that relies not only on the military, but also energy, tourism, finance and technology. Poised to add nearly 30,000 jobs this year, the city is swaggering while the rest of the country is still getting back on its feet.

Local entrepreneur Kyle Gish reckons the **San Antonio Small Business Development Center** has much to do with the city's metamorphosis. "The SBDC has been a darn good vehicle for growth," he says, noting it played a major role in transforming his company from a backroom air filter distributor to a multimillion-dollar enterprise with more than 20,000 square feet of warehouse space in San Antonio and Houston.

Gish, a former navy pilot, had limited business experience when he inherited his father's firm, called **Dustless Air Filter**.

So he enrolled in the center's "Building Business Excellence" program—designed for companies that have hit a growth ceiling. The months-long course brought Gish up to speed on topics ranging from leadership to financial literacy.

And a well-connected advisor hooked him up with an SBA lender, who supplied \$1.3 million in working capital. Gish used the funds to open warehouses and add capacity to his distribution business.

"This SBDC is like a concierge service for businesses," he says. "It's phenomenal."

Affiliated with the University of Texas in San Antonio, the center caters to businesses across a large swath of land near the Southwestern border of Texas. Naturally, it specializes in cross-border trade and boasts access to the International Trade Center, which was created to serve all chapters in the South-West Texas Border SBDC network. Housed in the same university building as the San Antonio SBDC, it is the largest trade assistance center of its kind in the country.

"Who are the buyers in a particular country? What kind of tariffs are you facing? What are the regulations involved?" says Doug Smith, the trade center's assistant director. "We help business owners tackle all those issues."

Smith, who has helped companies export goods ranging from construction material to dried lentils, says the trade center spent more than 5,000 hours consulting businesses and accounted for \$181 million in exported goods last year.

In a throwback to the missions of old San Antonio, staffers helped the Mexican government set up SBDCs south of the border, where there are now more than 90 chapters. The idea is to work with SBDC counterparts in Latin America to help connect—and facilitate trade between—companies on either side of the border.

In addition to trade, the SBDC's advisors are well-versed in government contracting, veteran assistance programs and a host of other areas, says director Morrison Woods.

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