

SBA names MEC's O'Berry Small Business Person of the Year

By Patricia Bowen

September 2, 2004 – The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has named Clarence O'Berry, Chief Executive Officer of Mandaree Enterprise Corp. (MEC), as Region 8 Small Business Person of the Year. As winner of one of the ten regional awards, O'Berry is eligible for the national-level award.

He was also selected as one of the 50 Most Influential Minorities in Business by the Minority Business Professional Network, a Washington D.C.-based group.

O'Berry started MEC, Mandaree's largest business, 13 years ago with just five employees. Today, the company has expanded to employ 70 workers completing about \$300 million in government contracts per year.

The company provides diverse products and services that include airplane wiring harnesses, records management and hardware and software supplies. One of the newest project is a \$14 million contract with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to collect and analyze customer satisfaction data from residents of public housing projects.

O'Berry is quite proud of MEC's business incubator program for Native American businesses and startups.

"The service provides mentoring and help with business infrastructure," he said. "It helps native businesses get started."

Included in the program services are office space, use of conference rooms, shared computer resources, high speed internet access, business planning and strategy advice, legal counseling and document preparation and assistance to review and analyze marketing and business development plans. The mentoring program also provides shared help desk services to support technical issues; a human resources department; and guidance on establishing billing, payroll, financial statements and accounts receivable and payable.

"The entrepreneurs must provide a business and work plan, O'Berry said. "After startup, they receive ongoing evaluation and continued support."

MEC has partnered with Computer Science Corp. (CSC), a leading global information technology company, as part of a mentor-protégé program sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security. The goal of the program is to foster long-term business relations between large prime contractors and small businesses.

"The partnership helps us compete for prime contracts and subcontracting awards," said O'Berry.

Both companies are interested in North Dakota State Senator Kent Conrad's proposed high technology "smart border" project to test technical solutions for securing remote stretches of the U.S.-Canadian border from a base in Grand Forks.

CSC will help MEC with financing, contracting, marketing, preparing proposals, systems engineering and developing technical capabilities.

MEC is also partnering with S & L Technologies as a subcontractor providing information technology support for Iraqi reconstruction.

The company remains closely tied to the original mentor, New Town's Northrop Grumman, and one of the MEC's primary products is the aircraft wiring harnesses both companies manufacture. MEC workers currently produce wiring harnesses and cables for drone targets, the Global Hawk airplane, the Jstar 747 system, AWACS planes and B-2 bombers. Workers also manufacture printed circuit board and panel assemblies.

Another new venture is procurement for federal agencies. MEC fills government orders for hardware and software as well as for office supplies, offering discounts of up to 40 percent. So far, customers include the

Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior.

MEC's steady growth and O'Berry, the company's anchor, are evidence of a North Dakota success story.

O'Berry shared credit for his success with his dedicated employees.

"In North Dakota, we can do anything," he said.

SOURCE Thursday, September 2, 2004, New Town News
CONTACT Patricia Bowen

[<< Return to Top](#)