

TRANSPARENCY IS ESSENTIAL

A Systematic Commitment to Transparency from the United States Small Business Administration in Every Aspect of the Application Process

The ScholarshipAuditions.com experience with the process of obtaining an EDI Loan, which we believe is common among the hundreds of thousands of small businesses that have applied for aid, has been constantly hampered by a lack of communication and bureaucratic roadblocks. This has resulted in applicants always feeling like supplicants, begging for the very assistance the agency was created to provide. Many small business owners have walked away in defeat after finding themselves constantly having to defend their requests for aid. The Small Business Administration was created to be a supportive partner in keeping America's small business alive and thriving. Since we, and many others, have not experienced this, it is imperative that changes be made to make the small business owners feel heard and helped.

The following are a few suggestions, based on our experience, we feel would address these concerns:

- An outline on the SBA website of every aspect (stage) of the process as the application moves from department to department, including, if applicable, email addresses for contacting the new department
- Realistic expectations, clearly defined, as to how long each stage of the process should take
- An assigned department (or individual), with knowledge of the application process, to contact with questions or to request guidance. (Each time calls were placed to the SBA by our office, the individual who answered the phone had to be asked to review the file to determine its status. This should have been the first, automatic response when the call was answered.)
- Provision of clear instructions when applications and/or forms are returned for correction or additional information (Our office received instructions to "complete and return" one form 15 times)

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- Commitment to following through on promised actions. One representative sent an email to our office, promising to call to discuss our application by the end of the day. Three weeks later, with several calls and emails from our office, no call has been received. There is currently language in response emails from disastercustomerservice@sba.org that reads "If you are requesting information about the status of your application, our customer service team will respond with an estimated time frame for when your application will move through processing." We have received this auto-response email at least three times. To date, there has been no response from the SBA customer service team.