

of Federally backed small business loans and grants impedes efforts to measure and advance equity for women-owned and minority-owned firms. The Committee urges SBA to collect and make publicly available data on loans provided to women-owned and minority-owned businesses, and to include racial and gender equity analyses in reports to Congress on its lending programs.

*8(a) Program Support.*—The Committee supports the 8(a) Business Development Program as a successful tool to assist small, disadvantaged businesses compete in the American economy. However, the Committee is concerned that a significant number of 8(a) participants struggle to survive following the completion of the program. The Committee encourages SBA to conduct a survey of the financial health of former 8(a) participants not more than three years separated from enrollment in the program. The Committee urges SBA to disaggregate participant data by race and gender wherever possible. The Committee encourages SBA, through its resource partners and the Community Navigator program, to reach out to former 8(a) firms to provide information on the resources available to support their continued success in the Federal contracting arena.

*Employee Ownership.*—The Committee recognizes that employee-owned businesses are uniquely structured and provide wide-ranging benefits for businesses, workers, and the local economy. The Committee notes that the Main Street Employee Ownership Act, which Congress enacted in section 862 of Public Law 115–232, requires SBA to make structural changes in SBA lending programs to ease the challenges faced by employee-owned businesses in accessing financing. This legislation also requires SBA to use Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) to establish an employee-owned business promotion program to provide assistance on structure, business succession, and planning. SBA is directed to fully implement these requirements. The Committee further directs SBA to work with the Departments of Agriculture, Labor, and Commerce to provide education and outreach to businesses, employees and financial institutions about employee-ownership, including co-operatives and employee stock ownership plans; provide technical assistance to assist employees' efforts to become businesses; and assist in accessing capital sources.

*Cybersecurity Support to Small Businesses.*—The Committee encourages SBA to require cybersecurity technical assistance in its Federal contracting support programs, particularly for small businesses competing for contracts in sensitive or classified fields.

*Information Technology Systems.*—The SBA OIG has repeatedly documented SBA's challenges with major IT investments. The agency's early struggles with the implementation of COVID–19 relief programs further emphasized the need for significant investments in IT infrastructure and public-facing portals to handle the growth in user transactions. The Committee directs the SBA Chief Information Officer (CIO) to brief the Committee not later than 60 days after enactment of this Act on the challenges with maintaining, improving, and providing appropriate oversight over SBA IT systems, and resource needs for the CIO to adequately address problems across existing IT systems, particularly with industry-standard independent verification and validation.

*Office of Rural Affairs.*—The SBA Office of Rural Affairs was authorized in 1990 to help SBA serve farmers and rural small businesses, but the office has never been fully established. In 2020, SBA took steps to implement this long-overdue Congressional mandate, but the mission, operations, organization, and funding requirements for the Office have not been clearly defined or explained. The Committee is dismayed that SBA has yet to submit the report required in House Report 116–456 on the Office of Rural Affairs, and expects SBA to expeditiously submit this long-overdue report.

*Ascent Platform.*—The Committee is encouraged by SBA’s efforts to develop free online educational resources for women-owned small businesses through the Ascent digital platform. SBA is urged to continue these efforts and to explore opportunities to develop similar resources for entrepreneurs from historically underrepresented groups.

*Solopreneurs.*—The Committee recognizes the large number of small businesses that are owned and operated by one individual, also known as a “solopreneur.” The Committee encourages SBA to pursue efforts to reduce existing barriers that limit access to funding and technical assistance opportunities in order to help solopreneurs expand and scale up their businesses.

*Language Access for Limited English Proficiency.*—The Committee recognizes that small business owners with limited English proficiency (LEP) are often unable to complete SBA’s online loan and grant application forms due to language barriers, leaving these businesses without the access to critical business funding. Businesses owned by LEP individuals must be provided language access when applying for SBA funding, especially at a time when businesses are rebuilding from the coronavirus pandemic. The Committee urges the Administrator to make online application forms available in at least the top 20 most commonly spoken languages other than English, based on the latest Census data.

*Nonprofit Child Care Support.*—The Committee recognizes the critical role of child care providers in supporting the economy and workforce, and encourages the Administrator to consider allowing qualified nonprofit child care providers access to the same SBA loan programs that for-profit child care providers may utilize.

*Small Business Succession Planning.*—The Committee is concerned that more than 58 percent of businesses do not have succession plans. The Committee encourages SBA to work with its resource partners to develop guidance, training, best practices, workshops, and other resources, to assist small business owners and entrepreneurs in establishing and executing a business succession plan. In addition, SBA should consider the development of a publicly available online toolkit that can be used by SBA and its resource partners to guide small businesses through the process of creating a business succession plan.

*Small Business Participation in Federal Contracting.*—The SBA Office of Government Contracting employs a team of Area Directors, Procurement Center Representatives (PCR), Commercial Market Representatives (CMR), and size and industrial specialists that collaborate with Federal agencies to increase Federal contract awards to small businesses. These professionals are critical to the success of small business contractors, encouraging new entrants