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FAR COUNCIL MOVES SOLE SOURCE CONTRACTS FOR WOMEN OWNED COMPANIES FORWARD

WASHINGTON, D.C. (January 4, 2016) – As one of the federal government’s last acts of 2015, the Federal Acquisition Regulatory (FAR) Council issued an interim rule on December 31, 2015, to immediately allow contracting officers to award sole source contracts in the Women Owned Small Business (WOSB) procurement program. While the Small Business Administration (SBA) already finalized their rules for WOSB sole source on October 14, 2015, the FAR Council [formalized its adoption](#) on December 31 and issued guidance to contracting officers with respect to the change in the law passed last year. Although allowing for a comment period of 60 days, this rule is effective immediately. Notably, the FAR Council determined this new sole source also applies to acquisitions at or below the simplified acquisition threshold.

“Although SBA directed contracting officers to start using the sole source authority under the WOSB procurement program, adoption by the FAR Council provides another layer of certainty and direction,” said Kristie Arslan, Executive Director of Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP). “WIPP actively sought this action, urging the FAR Council to expeditiously adopt this change into the rules governing federal buying,” she added.

Sole source contracts are permitted under the WOSB program when four conditions are met: One, the contract falls in a NAICS code approved for the WOSB program; two, the value of the contract is under \$4 million (\$6.5 million for manufacturing contracts); three, the contract can be awarded at a fair or reasonable price and four, the contracting officer does not have a reasonable expectation that two or more WOSBs/EDWOSBs will submit offers at a fair and reasonable price.

The WOSB procurement program, officially launched in 2011, is a critical entry point into government contracting for women entrepreneurs nationwide. The FAR Council took a significant step toward parity among all contracting set-asides last week with the publishing of the sole source rule. WIPP has advocated for leveling the playing field in procurement for over 15 years and the FAR Council’s implementation of sole source authority was one of the last hurdles facing the WOSB Program. WIPP is hopeful that this improvement will assist Federal Agencies to reach their 5% contracting goal for women-owned firms.

WIPP has championed this issue over the years and applauds the Small Business Administration (SBA), Administrator Maria Contreras-Sweet and legislators such as Senators Maria Cantwell, Jeanne Shaheen and Representative Jackie Speier for their leadership and efforts to bring parity to women contractors.

About WIPP

Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP) is a nonprofit, membership organization working to increase the economic power and public policy clout of women business owners by providing business skills

education, leadership opportunities for business and personal growth, and a seat at the table amongst policymakers in Washington, D.C. Founded in 2001, WIPP is recognized as a national, nonpartisan voice for women entrepreneurs, advocating on behalf of its coalition of 4.7 million businesswomen including 78 business organizations. For more information, please visit www.WIPP.org.

For more on the campaign to bring sole source to the WOSB Procurement Program, visit [here](#).

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