



# Alabama Small Business Development Center Network

Strengthening Alabama's Economy, One Small Business at a Time.

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## Carol DeCastra Recognized by SBA for Disaster Response Efforts

Tuscaloosa, AL

August 2011

Mr. Ed Williams, Field Operations Supervisor for SBA's Office of Disaster Assistance, officially recognized and thanked Carol DeCastra for her "dedication, hard work, and most of all the compassion she showed to the disaster victims." DeCastra is a Finance Consultant for the Alabama SBDC Network, and has a long history of helping Alabama's small business community.

For several months following the April 2011 tornadoes, DeCastra worked in Tuscaloosa's Small Business Recovery Information Center (BRIC), an outreach initiative of the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama that brought together certified counselors from the Alabama SBDC Network and disaster response specialists from SBA and FEMA. According to Williams, "she interviewed, issued, and reviewed SBA Disaster Applications for both homes and business. Her ability to deep screen the applications afforded the disaster victim a speedy and more favorable decision during the processing phase."

Williams noted that should another disaster strike Alabama, "not only will she be a valuable asset to the SBA Disaster Team, but she will be a valuable asset to the disaster victim."

With interest rates as low as 2.7 percent, many business owners requested assistance from SBA and SBDC counselors in evaluating how an SBA-backed loan could aid them during their recovery. Business and qualified nonprofit owners could apply for as much as \$2 million to cover uninsured repairs or replacements to property and assets, such as equipment or inventory.



Fortunately for business owners in west Alabama, this was not DeCastra's first foray into disaster assistance. For several months following the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill in 2010, DeCastra and other counselors from the Alabama SBDC Network were stationed at SBA disaster assistance centers in Bayou LaBatre and in Gulf Shores.

“Beyond her expertise in business finance, the real benefit that Carol brings to the table is her ability to listen to and connect with small business owners,” says Michael Brooks, director of program operations for the Alabama SBDC Network. “Carol has a statewide reputation as a small business advocate and as a counselor known for her patient, listening-centered philosophy. As one counselor put it, she ‘listens first, no matter how long it takes.’”

As a Finance Consultant with the Alabama SBDC Network, Carol DeCastra helps companies access a wide range of private and public sector trade financing programs. She has over 25 years of experience in banking in both operations and management positions, most recently as Vice President of the International Division of Compass Bank. She has served in a leadership role with a number of trade development organizations including president of the Alabama World Trade Association and chair of the Birmingham Area Chamber of Commerce’s International Trade Council.



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The Alabama Small Business Development Center Network is a statewide program designed to enhance economic growth in Alabama by providing management and technical assistance to small businesses. The Alabama SBDC Network is an accredited member of the most comprehensive small business assistance network in the United States. Certified business counselors are available in 12 SBDC locations across the state. ASBDC Counselors provide no-cost assistance to companies and individuals in Alabama that are interested in starting or growing a business, disaster assistance and recovery, franchising, accessing capital, selling to the federal government, or exploring international trade.

Take action today: Call us at 877-825-7232, 205-348-1582, visit [www.ASBDC.org](http://www.ASBDC.org), or email [ASBDC@ua.edu](mailto:ASBDC@ua.edu).