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Panel II: Business Owners' Perspectives and Attention to Technical Assistance Provided by SBA Programs to Louisiana Businesses

The citizens of Louisiana are well aware of the impact of small businesses in our communities. Studies and research repeatedly show that the small business owner was affected the most from the hurricanes of 2005, with the biggest loss seen in the retail and service industries. The southwest region, as a whole, by 2006Q2 had returned to within 1% of its pre-storm firm count, with the exception of Cameron Parish that was down 20.8%. The businesses with the highest percent of failure rate were those with only 1 to 5 employees. However, despite the loss businesses received as a result of the hurricanes, many new businesses have been created and started as a result of the storms as well.

The difficulty in which business owners are experiencing in trying to reestablish, grow, or begin their business is, bottom line, funding. It is from the funding issue that the other needs emerge; meaning, funds are needed to purchase necessary equipment in order to service customers, train employees, develop and provide product and more; however, technology is ever-changing and the workforce pool less experienced and educated causing an immediate need for training in business relations and stewardship and for the use of the equipment. This training is not only needed for the workforce, but training is also needed for the employers.

The types of technical assistance (TA) that are needed vary and depend greatly on the industry; however, one need that has come forward as a common voice is operating software assistance (Vista, Mac, XP) and business application software (Office, QuickBooks, InfoPath, etc.) as one.

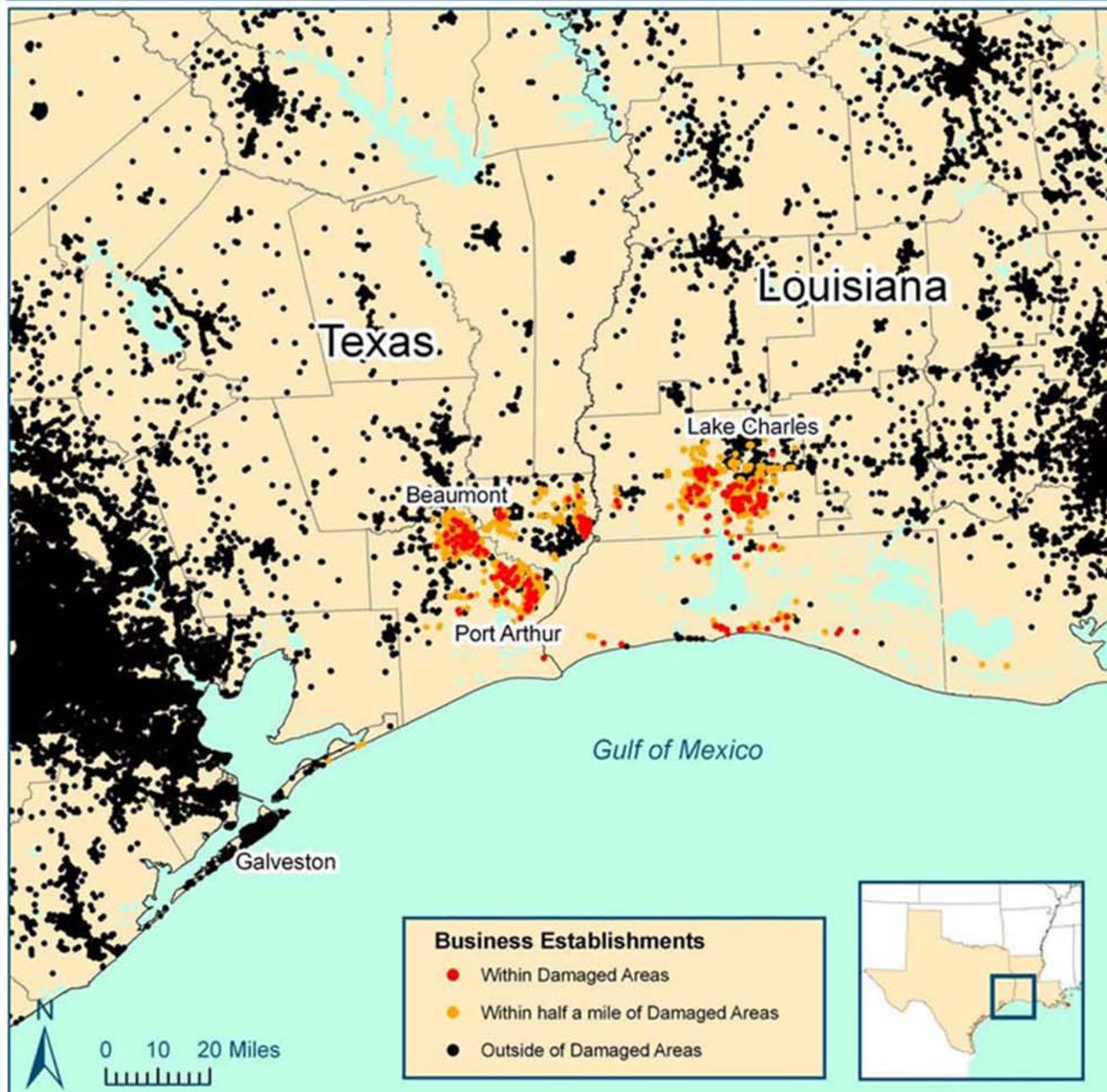
Additionally, since the events of 2005, many small businesses have entered into the e-commerce industry, which has led to additional needs in web site development, content, and secure purchasing options. Finally, with the need of computer applications training develops the need of continuing education development training for incoming, new, and existing employees.

With small businesses hiring two out of every three people in this country, they account for employing nearly half of America's workforce. As for the profile of the small business owner, women currently own more than a quarter of all businesses and the number of women-owned businesses is growing (this does not take into account married or co-owned businesses). Additionally, Hispanic Americans are opening their own businesses at a rate three times the national average.

In Louisiana in 2002 women-owned firms totaled 86,844, an increase of 23 percent from 1997, and generated \$12.3 billion in revenues. Firms owned jointly by women and men numbered 44,196 with revenues of \$9.7 billion. Women represented 32.7 percent of the self-employed persons in the state. In 2002, Hispanic-owned firms numbered 7,646, an increase of 15 percent from 1997. Black-owned firms numbered 40,252, an increase of 56 percent; Asian-owned firms numbered 8,224, an increase of 28 percent; American Indian and Alaska Native-owned firms numbered 2,707, a decrease of 16 percent; and the number of Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander-owned businesses was unavailable. (Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau.)

Louisiana is off to a great start in rebuilding and establishing our economy, but small businesses need our help to keep our communities strong!

Business Establishments within Rita-Damaged Areas as Identified by FEMA Texas and Louisiana



Texas

0.1% of Texas' employment was within the FEMA Identified Damage Areas

Business Establishments	Employees	Quarterly Wages
565	9,540	\$86,449,504

1.2% was inside or within half a mile of the FEMA Identified Damage Areas

Business Establishments	Employees	Quarterly Wages
6,342	110,894	\$1,083,940,055

Louisiana

0.2% of Louisiana's employment was within the FEMA Identified Damage Areas

Business Establishments	Employees	Quarterly Wages
233	3,066	\$28,764,962

2.1% was inside or within half a mile of the FEMA Identified Damage Areas

Business Establishments	Employees	Quarterly Wages
2,380	38,457	\$322,014,376

Data source:
Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), developed through a cooperative program between the states and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
FEMA Remote Sensing Damage Areas
1800 September 28, 2005, www.gismaps.fema.gov

Data notes:
Employment is from December 2004. Quarterly Wages are the total paid for the Fourth Quarter of 2004. Data are adjusted to include business establishments for whom accurate addresses are not available.

Cartography by:
State of California
Employment Development Department
www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov
September 2005

