

Inc.

WOMEN WITHOUT CEILINGS | [Geri Stengel](#)

Mar 15, 2012

Where to Get Free Help For Your Business

Corporations, states and Uncle Sam offer loads of free help to women-owned businesses. Grab it and pull yourself up to the next level of growth.



One of the constant refrains of business owners is how lonely the job is. When you're the boss, and when you're trying to create something of value out of nothing, it often looks like there's no help to be seen.

But if that's how you feel, you're just not looking hard enough.

There is, in fact, a lot of help for entrepreneurs. Most of it is free, and a good share of it is targeted specifically at women. Some of it, we're proud to say, comes from this organization. Inc. sponsors more than 60 free events around the country each

year. You can keep up with them by following [@Incevents](#) on Twitter.

A large share of the other free resources are sponsored by government bodies or by corporations that benefit from a healthy small business sector.

If you're in the New York area, for example, you want to check out [New York City's new Compete to Win](#) program for minority- and women-owned businesses. The program can help you partner with other businesses to get a better chance at government contracts or link you to a nine-month executive education program. And before you dismiss contracting with New York City, consider that in the 2011 fiscal year, the city awarded \$563 million to minority- and women-owned businesses.

Other states — particularly California, Texas, Florida and Virginia — are reaching out to small businesses with financing, training, relocation, and other services as are other cities, such as [Detroit](#).

New York City's Compete to Win programs are in addition to [NYC Business Solutions](#) with its general resources for financing, opening, running, and staying in business.

Then there's federal contracting. The federal government will spend about \$115 billion — that's with a "b" — on contracts with small businesses; 5% of that pie is set aside for minority-owned businesses, 5% for women-owned businesses. As noted in this story about how to land a federal contract, simply applying for federal contracting can feel like a career in itself. But you can get help with that, too.

The [Give Me 5%](#) program provides education and access to women in federal contracting, including online training that takes you from complete novice to master of the acronyms and processes needed to get contracts.

If that's not enough, check out the [Small Business Administration](#), which has general business information, contracting information, and counseling at local offices as well as a [Office of Women's Business Ownership](#).

Or the [Procurement Technical Assistance Program](#), which has training events at offices around the country to help with federal contracting.

The [Victory in Procurement Program](#) offered by American Express OPEN offers seminars, lots of online information, and in-person networking opportunities.

Goldman Sachs 10,000 Businesses program, which gives small businesses access to business education, financial capital and business support services is expanding its reach to new cities, six as of now, but more will be added.

GE's [ecomagination Challenge](#) and [healthymagination Challenge](#) sourced innovative solutions, funded them, connected them to markets and provided infrastructure support. Phase 2 of the healthymagination Challenge is anticipated to launch late 2012.

Dell has its [Women Powering Business](#) initiative; AT&T has its [Small Business InSite](#).

You get the idea. Now, go get the help. These corporations know that your success contributes to their success.