

Pathways & Connections

*News and events from the Massachusetts
Supplier Diversity Office (SDO)*



January 2024

Resources for
Diverse and
Small
Businesses

Open Bid
Opportunities
on COMMBUYS

SDO and
Commonwealth
Training
Opportunities

Directory of
Certified
Businesses

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

On Monday, Jan. 15, the SDO celebrated MLK Day and recognized the legacy of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

Please see the news item below regarding Governor Healey's announcements regarding the SDO at this year's MLK Breakfast.

Governor Healey Announces New Efforts to Expand State Contracts to Diverse Businesses

At this year's Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Breakfast, Governor Maura Healey, in partnership with the SDO, announced additional efforts to increase state contracts with diverse and small businesses by assessing and reopening contracts that can provide such opportunities.

"Our administration applies an equity lens to everything we do – and that includes the process to award state contracts. We're proud to be taking this step to reopen contracts that can provide more opportunities for diverse and small businesses to compete," said **Governor Maura Healey**. "We're also increasing efforts to reach out directly to

diverse entrepreneurs and connect them with the resources they need to succeed, as well as swearing in a group of leaders to offer advice to help guide our efforts to identify and remove barriers for diverse and small businesses.”

The state’s purchasing agency, the Operational Services Division (OSD), and the SDO have partnered to assess and reopen statewide contracts that can provide more opportunities for diverse and small businesses. Together, they have identified opportunities for businesses in information technology, energy and climate action, and in contracts for a range of industries. These newly identified contracts will reopen for new vendors later this year, and regular reviews will be conducted in the future in order to find more opportunities to include new diverse businesses.

[Click here for the full press release.](#)

SDO Advisory Board Members Announced

In addition to announcing new efforts to bring diverse businesses into state contracting (see news item above), Governor Healey also announced the SDO Diverse and Small Business Advisory Board.

The Board is made up of 15 diverse business leaders from across the state and will guide the SDO in its mission and work to identify and remove barriers for diverse and small businesses. The Chair of this Board will be Nicole Obi, President, and CEO of the Black Economic Council of Massachusetts (BECMA).

The board is scheduled to hold its first meeting on January 24. Board members include:

- **Nicole Obi**, President and CEO of BECMA
- **Eneida Roman**, President and CEO of Amplify Latinx
- **Qingjian (Q.J.) Shi**, Director of the Asian Business Empowerment Council
- **Gaby King Morse**, President and CEO of Center for Women & Enterprise New England
- **Ray Milano**, Director of the Veterans Business Outreach Center Program for the U.S. Small Business Administration
- **Collette Divitto**, CEO and COO of Colletty's Cookies
- **Grace Moreno**, Executive Director of the Massachusetts LGBT Chamber of Commerce

- **Maria Gonzalez**, Founder and Managing Partner of M&A Supplier Diversity Consultants, LLC
- **Karim Hill**, President and CEO of BDC Community Capital Corp
- **Alex Guardiola**, Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Policy for Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce
- **Tracye Whitfield**, Executive Director for the Coalition for an Equitable Economy
- **A.J. Enchill**, President and Executive Director for the Berkshire Black Economic Council
- **Elaine Chow**, Founder of Chopvalue Boston
- **Joanne Wang**, Director of Corporate Service for the Greater New England Minority Supplier Development Council

The SDO Partners with NaVOBA



Earlier this month, the Healey-Driscoll Administration announced that the SDO has entered into a new partnership with the National Veteran Owned Business Association (NaVOBA), an independent nonprofit that certifies businesses owned by veterans and service-disabled veterans. This partnership will enable them to help veteran-owned businesses bid on contracts across the state.

Under the new agreement, the SDO will grant certifications to businesses already certified with NaVOBA. Typically, businesses need to apply and undergo an investigation from the SDO before they receive certification. This agreement streamlines the process, making these businesses able to receive the benefits of SDO certification, such as the ability to bid on state contracts and attend SDO trainings and networking events.

“Our Supplier Diversity Office does incredible work every day to expand opportunities for diverse and small businesses to win contracts with the state, which makes our businesses, our economy and our communities stronger,” said **Governor Maura Healey** in announcing the partnership. “Our veterans have sacrificed so much in service to our country, and we take the responsibility of supporting them very seriously here in

Massachusetts. We are proud to launch this new partnership that will lower barriers for veteran-owned businesses to bid for contracts and do business with the state.”

[Click here for the full press release.](#)

We want to hear your success stories!



The SDO is looking for news about new contracts, business growth, and other milestones from SDO-certified diverse and small businesses. Your story might be featured on our website, the *Pathways & Connections* newsletter, or our social media feeds!

In particular, we are looking for stories from black-owned businesses so we can feature them in our February issue in honor of Black History Month!

If you have a success story to share, please [fill out this form](#) and hit the “Submit” button. We would love to hear from you!

**SDO Means
*Business***

Click here for more!

Don't Miss These Upcoming Events!

LGBTCC Fireside Chat

When: February 7, 12:00pm- 4:00pm

Where: Holiday Inn Hotel Somerville MA

[Register here](#)

Haitian Chamber of Commerce Small Business Technical Assistance

When: Flexible Scheduling (click link below to register and schedule a session)

Where: Zoom

[Register and schedule a meeting here](#)

Mass Office on Disability Networking Event

When: April 10, 10am – 1pm

Where: Zoom

Registration: Will open in February

SBA Advantage: Starting and Growing a Business

When: February 13, 10:30am – 12pm

Where: 10 Causeway Street 2nd floor, room 265 Boston, MA 02222

[Register Here](#)

Check Out these Current and Upcoming Bids!

Featured Bid - Energy, Climate Action, and Facility Advisory Services (PRF74)

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has reopened the PRF74 Statewide Contract to solicit additional bidders for the acquisition of Energy, Climate Action, and Facility Advisory Services. The PRF74 contract is used by Executive Departments of the Commonwealth, as well as other eligible entities.

Review the bid opportunity [here](#)!

Other Bidding opportunities:

- **OFF52: Office, School, and Library Furniture, Accessories, and Services**, replacing OFF38. [Link to the Bid.](#)
- **FAC124: Bid Reopening for Building Maintenance Repair and Operations Project Material and Supplies.** [Link to the Bid.](#)
- **Social Equity RFR for Technical Assistance and Training.** [Link to the RFR.](#)
- **FAC119: Maintenance Repair and Operations (MRO) Retail Products and Supplies.** [Link to the Bid.](#)
- **OFF53: Office Supplies, Recycled Paper, and Envelopes.** [Link to the Bid.](#)
- **FAC126: Records Management, Storage and Archiving Services**, replacing FAC96. [Link to the Intent to Bid.](#)

There are a number of catering bids, many of which have rolling enrollments:

- **Catering Conference** - [Link to the bid](#)
- **Bottled Soda and Related Services** - [Link to the bid](#)
- **Emergency Assistance Food Services** - [Link to the bid](#)
- **Bid Name: MassDOT RFR Catering Services** - [Link to the bid](#)
- **EA Hotel Motel Provider Services** - [Link to the bid](#)
- **Event Services** - [Link to the bid](#)
- **RFR 232128 Catering Services, Conference Space, Hotel Room** - [Link to the bid](#)
- **Restaurant Food Take-out/Delivery Services** - [Link to the bid](#)
- **Restaurant Food Take-out/Delivery Services** - [Link to the bid](#)
- **Event and Emergency Services Contracts** - [Link to the bid](#)
- **MDAR- Conference Service Vendors** - [Link to the bid](#)
- **Conference Space, Meeting Space and Hotel Accommodations** - [Link to the bid](#)
- **Conference Space, General Catering Services, and Hotel Accommodations** - [Link to the bid](#)
- **DCF Meetings16-Conference Space and Catering Services** - [Link to the bid](#)

You can also check out all the newly posted bids on COMMBUYS each week by [visiting this link.](#)



The Supplier Diversity Hub - an Easy, Free Way to Help Grow Your Business

Diverse and small vendors now have full access to the Supplier Diversity Hub ("The Hub")! Already in use by state agencies, The Hub is a free, new way to help grow your business.

Using The Hub, diverse and small businesses can now receive a number of benefits. Communication between them and prime contractors as well as public buyers is easier, they can receive immediate notifications about new bidding opportunities, and they have instant access to check the status of their SDO certification.

[Please click here to get started](#); if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at webmaster.sdo@mass.gov.

Supplier Diversity Office

Supplier Diversity Hub

Welcome to the Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Hub (The Hub).
This online portal facilitates connections between diverse and small businesses,
Commonwealth public buyers, prime bidders, contractors, and resource providers.

New Users

To see if you qualify to use the Hub, diverse and small businesses, Commonwealth public buyers, prime bidders, contractors, and resource providers should click here:

[Start Registration](#)

Existing Users

Login

Password

[Reset Password](#)

[Sign In](#)

[Supplier Diversity Office \(SDO\) Home](#)
[Help and Questions](#)

Notice: Emails from The Hub come from the address noreply.sdh@agcgovsolutions.com. Please add this email to your safe senders list as they may end up in your spam folder. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us at webmaster.sdo@state.ma.us

The new Hub log-in screen

Meet the SDO: Nani Assefa, Director of SDO Systems and Data Analytics

Each month, we feature a different member of our team to share a little bit about themselves and discuss useful information and resources the SDO has available for diverse and small businesses. Please send any questions for the SDO team to robert.keane@mass.gov.

What made you want to work at the SDO?

My commitment to the SDO more than two decades ago was fueled by its core mission: fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion. I find fulfillment in the collective pursuit of our mission to empower both our customers and colleagues. I am deeply passionate about supporting diverse businesses and addressing their unique needs.

My dedication is rooted in the dynamic work environment and in having a meaningful impact on SDO goals and objectives.

You have been working on the SDO Hub. What is that and how will it help diverse and small businesses?

The HUB is an online networking system that allows agencies and prime vendors to connect with diverse and small businesses and improves the accuracy of tracking, validation, and reporting of businesses and spending.

The Hub is now live and will improve transparency and accountability, provide informed decision-making for agencies, and increase vendor engagement by identifying opportunities. It will also drive economic expansion in diverse communities and promote diversity and inclusion.

In the end, our goal with the Hub is to enhance our responsiveness to inquiries about the fairness of state spending and cultivate inclusion through sustained engagement with diverse vendors.



Favorite quote:

"The only way to do great work is to love what you do." - Steve Jobs

Favorite song:

Three Little Birds
Bob Marley

Favorite vacation spot:

Ethiopia and Seychelles, located in the Indian Ocean, off the eastern coast of Africa

Favorite food:

The spicy Ethiopian dish injera with Shiro, Doro Wat, fish and vegetables. Yummy!

Pet peeve:

Losing Wi-Fi during important meetings

Last TV Show seen/binged:

Manifest

Last book read:

Born a Crime by Trevor Noah

Dog person or cat person?

Dog! Our sweet Coco (nick name Cocoiti) gives unconditional love to each one of us at home, creating a bond that is truly special! He will do anything for treats.

What do you hope to accomplish by working at the SDO?

Collaborating with a diverse team allows me to contribute my skills effectively, fostering innovation and creating a positive workplace culture. I aim to streamline the entire SDO systems process by leveraging cutting-edge technology. This includes implementing efficient workflows, enhancing user experience, and optimizing the overall application system to ensure seamless and effective operations. Helping others gives me a lot of satisfaction when the job is completed and they are satisfied. I am eager to learn new skills and the SDO is the place to be!

Tell us something about you that others may not know:

I enjoy decorating surprise parties for my loved ones and capturing **THOUSANDS** of pictures.

Nani Assefa can be reached at:
nani.assefa1@mass.gov



Diverse Business Certification Updates

SDO certified 27 businesses in December 2023. For the latest list of newly-certified businesses, please click [here](#).

REMINDER: SDO certification expires three years after the date of issue and renewal notices are sent via email to the primary contact on file. SDO-certified businesses should [log in](#) and review your contact information periodically to ensure that your certification stays up to date.



Pre-Certification Webinars

For businesses wishing to apply for SDO certification, attending a Pre-Certification Webinar is a must. This webinar covers the different types of SDO and SDO-recognized third-party certifications as well as the State certification process. Registration is now available for webinars from now through June 2024. Sign up [here](#).



New SDO training now available!

Don't Miss Out! Responding to RFQs

Are you a vendor that is enrolled in the Small Business Purchasing Program (SBPP) and currently on a statewide contract? Don't miss out on another COMMBUYS opportunity! In this class you will learn:

- The benefits of the SBPP
- The mechanics of a Request for Quotes (RFQ)
- How to identify and respond to an RFQ
- How RFQ's are evaluated

(PRE-REQUISITE: This class is for SBPP participants currently on a Statewide or Departmental contract)

This class is available on February 7 from 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Class size is limited! Please register in advance.

If you are interested in attending this class, [Click Here to register](#). Once registered, you will receive a confirmation email.

If you need special accommodations to fully participate in the training, please email Katherine.L.Thomas@mass.gov for assistance.

Follow us on:



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