Diverse & Small Business Certification:
Is it Right for your Firm?



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is committed to a fair, transparent and competitive procurement process, which ensures that diverse and small businesses are included in the Commonwealth's supply chain. Read on to see if your business may benefit from becoming certified through the Supplier Diversity Office (SDO).

What are the benefits of certification?

The SDO certification is available at no cost to your business. Certified companies receive invitations to training, networking and matchmaking events. Most importantly, certification opens the doors for your company's participation in these three Commonwealth Programs:

- The Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) was established to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in state contracting for goods and services by ensuring the full participation of diverse businesses. See the box on the right for the list of eligible business categories.
- The Small Business Purchasing Program (SBPP) aims to encourage the growth of small Massachusetts businesses. The combined mission of these programs is to increase business opportunities for diverse and small businesses.
- The Affirmative Marketing Programs (State and Municipal) were established to provide opportunities for MBEs, WBEs, SDVOBEs and VBEs in the design and construction of state buildings and state-funded buildings.

The SDO can help your business receive these certifications:

- Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) or Nonprofit Organization (M/NPO)
- Women Business Enterprise (WBE) or Nonprofit Organization (W/NPO)
- Portuguese Business Enterprise (PBE)
- Veteran Business Enterprise (VBE)
- Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise (SDVOBE)
- Disability-Owned Business Enterprise (DOBE)
- LGBT-Owned Business Enterprise (LGBTBE)
- Massachusetts-based Small Business

Who is eligible to be certified?

Eligibility is dependent on each certification category's guidelines. Generally speaking, the principal(s) (51% ownership) of the company applying for certification must be a member of the qualifying category—a woman, member of a minority group, or a veteran, for example. The principal(s) also must maintain control of the firm as an independent and ongoing company. Certification for Massachusetts-based small businesses depends on business location, size and the number of employees.

Becoming Certified by the Supplier Diversity Office

1. **Visit www.mass.gov/sdo/start** to find out which certifications may suit your business and what next steps you should take.
2. **Register your business in COMMBUYS.** Sign up for alerts for new bids and learn more about statewide contracts. If you are a Massachusetts-based small business, join or renew your Small Business Purchasing Program participation.
3. **If you are a Massachusetts-based business, attend a pre-certification workshop.** Walk through the rules and regulations regarding the certification process and the supplier diversity programs.
4. Non-Massachusetts businesses, please visit the SDO's "Certification Programs" page at www.mass.gov/sdo.
5. **Apply for certification.** Gather your documentation and submit your application for consideration.
6. **Get to work!** Certification is just the beginning—research prospective clients, learn more about contracting, and start promoting yourself as a diverse business.

Contact Us! For more information about diverse and small business certification, programs, policies, and forms, please consult the SDO's webpage at mass.gov/sdo. For other inquiries, email us at Webmaster.SDO@mass.gov.

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[1] *PBEs are certified for limited inclusion in supplier diversity programs as defined by 425 CMR §2.02.*

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