

Pathways & Connections

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



October 2025

Resources for
Diverse and
Small
Businesses

Open Bid
Opportunities
on COMMBUYS

SDO and
Commonwealth
Training
Opportunities

Directory of
Certified
Businesses



Bluebird Graphic Solutions owner Anthony Clayton (right) is interviewed for WCVB's "Made in Mass" feature. Check out his story below!

Celebrating your success Stories!

This month, the SDO celebrates these successes from certified businesses:

- [Bluebird Graphic Solutions](#) was featured in a WCVB Channel 5 "Made in Mass" spot with Doug Meehan. [See the spot here!](#)
- [Velney Construction](#) is proud to announce the launch of their new demolition and labor services, a strategic step that strengthens their ability to deliver comprehensive solutions across the construction industry. Their acceptance into the National Demolition Association (NDA) underscores this commitment, providing their team with advanced training and safety resources. With these expanded capabilities, Velney Construction is well-positioned to pursue and compete for government contracts, leveraging their certifications as an MBE, VBE, and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned firm.
- [The Sky's The Limit Consulting](#) recently announced their 25th anniversary! They have served government, nonprofit and corporate entities with their executive coaching, leadership development, training and facilitation services to organizations all over the US since 1999.
- Finally, Carlene Lewis, owner of [CAAN Fence, Inc.](#), sent us this moving testimonial:
"In 2012, when I first decided to pursue certification, I was terrified. I knew how much it meant for my future, but I didn't know what to expect. The very first person SDO sent to meet me was Bonnie (Bonnie Borch-Rote, now the SDO's Executive Director). I'll never forget her kindness and words of encouragement. She made me feel comfortable and confident that I was on the right path. That moment gave me the courage to move forward."

"Back then, my company started in residential fencing, but in 2019, we became unionized and took a leap into full commercial work. That decision, fueled by certification, opened the door to projects with the City of Boston, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and multiple municipal clients. Then, in March 2024, we achieved WOSB and EDWOSB certification, officially stepping into the federal contracting space. Today, CAAN Fence proudly serves the city, state, and federal government, building relationships and earning contracts that would have been unimaginable when we first started."

"I often reflect on how much these certifications have changed the trajectory of my life and my business. Without SDO, I wouldn't be in these rooms—partnering with MassDOT, MBTA, state agencies, and even the federal government. They've placed me in spaces and introduced me to people that I never would have had access to otherwise. These opportunities have expanded my reach, strengthened my business, and built a legacy for my family and community."

"I'm a woman-owned business owner and an immigrant from Jamaica, raised in Dorchester. Growing up, the Boys & Girls Club, YMCA, and community programs shaped me into the leader I am today. I see so many of those supports disappearing

for young people now, and it makes me even more grateful for the opportunities I've had. To think that a girl from Dorchester—an immigrant from Jamaica—can now stand in partnership with the city, the state, and the federal government is humbling and inspiring.

"What makes this journey even more powerful is that today, I sit on the Board of Directors for the American Fence Association, the leading voice in my industry, as well as the Board of the Better Business Bureau (BBB). To go from being uncertain and scared when I first applied for certification, to now helping guide national industry standards and supporting ethical business practices through the BBB, is a true testament to the doors that certification and SDO have opened.

"This company began as my husband's dream—his passion for fencing and his family lit the spark. Together, we built CAAN Fence to not only provide for our family but to create a legacy. And I can honestly say, I would not be in this seat today without the Supplier Diversity Office. Their guidance, advocacy, and commitment to putting businesses like mine in front of decision-makers has been transformative.

"SDO opens doors. They don't just certify you—they champion you, connect you, and give you the tools to thrive. I am living proof of how certification can change lives, strengthen communities, and empower women and minority-owned businesses to stand tall in spaces we never thought we belonged."

Want to tell us about your recent success? [Click here](#) and fill out the online form!

SDO at the Diversity Business Exhibit



We were thrilled to be at the Diversity Business Exhibit last month, a combined conference, trade show, and networking event designed specifically for entrepreneurs, business

leaders, and nonprofit professionals. The event took place at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, Rhode Island.

The SDO's Director of Supplier Diversity Programs John Fitzpatrick and Director of Programs and Engagement Michelle Mendes (pictured above) were there to spread the word about SDO certification and other programs designed to support underserved businesses. Mendes was also part of a panel discussing certification.

SDO Director Leads Panel on Becoming a Certified Woman-Owned Business



Wanda Colón-D'Angelo (pictured above), the SDO's Director of Diverse and Small Business Certification, will lead a discussion on the steps necessary to start a certified Woman-Owned Business.

Hosted by the Massachusetts Business Network, the Lunch & Learn webinar titled "Becoming a Certified Women-Owned Business" will cover the certification process, eligibility requirements, and the benefits of certification. The event takes place at noon on October 8 ([registration is available here](#)).

Joining Colón-D'Angelo will be Holly Foster, a Certification Manager at the Center for Women & Enterprise.

For the past two decades, Wanda has advocated for minority, women, veteran-owned and disadvantaged businesses for equity and inclusion opportunities and currently oversees the SDO's certifications for both in-state and out-of-state businesses.



Please join the SDO in celebrating Global Diversity Awareness Month! Observed in October, Global Diversity Awareness reminds us how our differences--whether it is our race, ethnicity, abilities, or lifestyle--contribute to a more inclusive, innovative, and engaged society and workplace.



New SDO Certification Webcasts

With the Massachusetts SDO's new pre-recorded webcast, for-profit diverse and small businesses no longer need to schedule an online webinar to apply for certification. With the webcast, you can now learn about certification and apply on your own timeline!

SDO certification enables traditionally underserved businesses to market themselves and participate in the state's bidding process. Certified businesses are listed in the database used by state buyers and prime vendors, receive news about upcoming bid opportunities, and learn about upcoming networking events.

Simply click the appropriate link below and click on the "Job Aid" link to get started!

Massachusetts-based businesses click here: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-diversity-certification-as-a-massachusetts-based-business>

Out-of-state-based businesses click here: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-diversity-certification-as-an-out-of-state-business>



MassDevelopment Offering Microloans for Small Massachusetts-Based Businesses

For nearly 30 years, MassDevelopment has used economic development tools, creative financing strategies, and experienced staff to stimulate business, drive economic growth, and help communities thrive across the Commonwealth.

MassDevelopment currently offers Microloans for Massachusetts small businesses from \$5,000 to \$100,000 to assist with working capital, or the purchase of furniture, fixtures, supplies, materials, and/or equipment. To qualify, businesses need to have been in business for at least 12 months and be a for-profit company.

For more information on the microloan program, [click here](#) or [visit this site](#) to learn more about MassDevelopment's products and services.

Check Out these Current and Upcoming Bids!



Bids:

- **WMR001** - Hazardous/Universal, Medical, and Electronic Waste Disposal and Emergency Response. [Link to the Bid](#)
- **PRF76** - Management Consultants, Program Coordinators, and Planners Services. [Link to the Bid](#)
- **ITS87**: IT Staff Augmentation. [Link to the Intent to Bid](#)

Intents to Bid:

- **ITT84**: Cellular Services and Devices. [Link to the Intent to Bid](#)
- **ITT85**: Network and Communication Services and Hardware. [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](#)
- MassAbility Catering, Conference Space, and Accommodations - [Link to the bid](#)
- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - Conference Space, General Catering Services, and Hotel Accommodations - [Link to the bid](#)
- 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, 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](#).

**SDO Means
*Business***
Click here for more!



Check out these upcoming events:

2025 Western Mass Developers Conference

Wednesday, October 15, 2025

8:30 a.m.

Join municipal leaders, developers, investors, industry experts, and change-makers at this event, which connects projects, partners, and possibilities in Western Massachusetts.

[Click here for more details and to register](#)

Certification and Commonwealth Goods and Services Contracting Webinar (LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce Event)

Thursday, October 9, 2025

Noon

Online event

Join SDO team members to learn how to become listed in the SDO's Directory as an LGBT Business Enterprise (LGBTBE) and the benefits of being in their network. This webinar will also cover how apply for the SDO's Small Business Purchasing Program (SBPP), the COMMBUYS system, and how the Commonwealth buys goods and services.

[Register for this event through Zoom](#)



Are you SDO Certified?

If you have a business owned by minorities, women, veterans, those with a disability, members of the LGBT community, and/or you own a small Massachusetts-based business, you are eligible for a vital source of support: SDO Certification.

Once you are certified, you will get updates on upcoming state contracts, have access to hours of free training, be given access to

the Supplier Diversity Hub, and you will be added to the SDO's diverse and small vendor database, which is used by Prime Vendors, state departments, cities and towns, and private businesses looking to spend with diverse and small businesses.

SDO certification is free and can provide your business with new opportunities and prospects.

In FY2024, the Commonwealth spent \$3.78 billion with diverse and small businesses. Many Massachusetts businesses say certification not only helped them stay in business during the pandemic but thrive because of new prospects.

Please note that if you are already certified with one of our partner organizations (such as Center for Women & Enterprise (CWE), Greater New England Minority Supplier Development Council (GNEMSDC), City of Boston, etc.), the steps to becoming SDO certified are simple and straightforward.

[To learn more about SDO Certification please click here!](#)

Reminder - Race/Ethnicity Information for MBEs

Currently, the Supplier Diversity Office (SDO) makes public the race and ethnicity of our certified Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs). This change is in response to many buyers looking to make purchases from Black, Latino/Hispanic, Asian, and Native

American/Indigenous Persons-Owned Businesses. These businesses are still classified as MBEs, but the additional racial makeup is publicly available in our search engine.

While this information is public, it does not affect any vendor's diversity status as an MBE, their ability to bid on and win bids, and their benefits with the SDO.

If any MBE would prefer to make their race and ethnicity information private, please contact us at webmaster.SDO@mass.gov.



Diverse Business Certification Updates

The SDO certified 39 businesses in September 2025. 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.



Upcoming Vendor Classes

NEW CLASS - Finding Business Opportunities for Certified Vendors

This session is a follow-up to Certified Vendor Onboarding and is designed specifically for certified vendors who want to expand their knowledge of how to identify and pursue Commonwealth opportunities that align with their business.

In this training, you will learn:

- How to determine whether to pursue contracts as a Prime Contractor or as an SDP Partner
- How to navigate the public procurement process
- Strategies for marketing your business effectively to government buyers
- No-cost resources available to help your business succeed

Limited Class Size! Please register in advance

Upcoming dates:

- **October** 28, 9 a.m.
- November 19, 9 a.m.

- December 23, 9 a.m.

[Link to register](#)

Small Business Purchasing Program (SBPP) for Vendors - NEW!

Executive Agencies must give special consideration to SBPP participants when buying non-construction goods and services estimated to cost \$250,000 or less per year.

One of the many benefits of the program is it can help you market your business to Massachusetts' Executive Department buyers. The program is free!

To qualify for the program, you must be a Massachusetts small business, in business for at least one year, employee 50 or fewer employees, and gross less than \$15 million a year.

The class outlines the specific qualifications and the application processes. You will also learn how to search for bid opportunities in COMMBUYS and available resources to help you grow your business.

Upcoming dates:

- **October** 23, 9 a.m.
- November 13, 9 a.m.
- December 4, 9 a.m.

[Link to register](#)

Unlocking Opportunities - How to Make Your State Certification Work for You

(PRE-REQUISITE: for Certified Diverse Businesses)

Learn more about using your certification to identify opportunities in public procurement and develop business-to-business relationships with other vendors. This training covers SDO programs, exploring business opportunities, creating SDP partnerships, and introducing free resources available to help grow your business.

Upcoming dates:

- **October** 22, 9 a.m.
- November 20, 9 a.m.
- December 16, 9 a.m.

[Link to register](#)

Prime Contractor Onboarding

(PRE-REQUISITE: This class is for Prime Contractors currently on Statewide and/or Departmental contracts).

Prime contractors are required to spend a percentage of contract sales with certified diverse businesses and report the spend. This webinar will help prime contractors understand how to meet the Supplier Diversity Plan (SDP) requirement. This class gives an overview of SDP, where to find eligible partners, and how to report SDP spend.

Upcoming dates:

- **October** 30, 9 a.m.

[Link to register](#)

Vendor Hub Reporting - for Prime Contractors

(PRE-REQUISITE: for Prime Contractors currently on Departmental contracts)

As part of all contract terms and conditions, prime contractors are required to report spending in the Supplier Diversity Hub. In this class, you will learn how to register in the Hub, submit SDP spend reports, add and manage users, and view current spend.

Upcoming dates:

- **October** 21, 9 a.m.
- November 5, 9 a.m.
- December 10, 9 a.m.

[Link to register](#)

Don't Miss Out! Responding to RFQs

(PRE-REQUISITE: for Small Business Purchasing Program participants currently on Statewide and/or Departmental contracts)

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, how to identify and respond to an RFQ, and how RFQ's are evaluated.

Upcoming dates:

- December 17, 9 a.m.

[Link to register](#)

Supplier Diversity Program for Health and Human Service Providers

(PRE-REQUISITE: This class is for Service Providers currently on Purchase of Service contracts)

Service providers on state contracts are required to develop partnerships with certified diverse vendors and report spend. This class gives an overview of the Supplier Diversity Program (SDP), where to find eligible partners, and how to report SDP spend in the UFR.

Upcoming dates:

- December 2, 9 a.m.

[Link to register](#)

Follow us on:



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