

## WHAT IS THE DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISE (DBE) PROGRAM?

The DBE program is a U.S. Department of Transportation program designed to ensure nondiscrimination in the award and administration of U.S. DOT-funded contracts and create a level playing field on which DBE firms can compete fairly for these contracts. The program requires agencies receiving funding from the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration or Federal Aviation Administration to make good-faith efforts to find and use DBE firms when possible.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO BECOME A DBE FIRM?

You must meet the following criteria to be certified as a DBE for all U.S. DOT-funded contracts:

- You must have a small business, as defined by Section 8(d) of the Small Business Act, and amended by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). 13 CFR 121, lists definitions for small businesses by industry type. SAFETEA-LU restricts the size of small businesses to a \$22.41 million (three-year average) gross income.
- You must be a socially and economically disadvantaged person or persons whose personal net worth does not exceed \$1.32 million.
- Your company must be owned (at least 51 percent ) by a socially and economically disadvantaged individual(s).

Those individual(s) presumed to be socially and economically disadvantaged by the federal government include members of the following groups.

- **Women**
- **Black Americans** – includes persons having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

- **Hispanic Americans** – includes persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Central or South American, or other Spanish or Portuguese culture or origin, regardless of race.
- **Native Americans** – includes persons who are American Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts or Native Hawaiians.
- **Asian-Pacific Americans** – includes persons whose origins are from Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea, Burma (Myanmar), Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia (Kampuchea), Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei, Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands (Republic of Palau), the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Island, Macao, Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, Juvalu, Nauru, Federated States of Micronesia, or Hong Kong.
- **Subcontinent Asian Americans** – includes persons whose origins are from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives Islands, Nepal or Sri Lanka.

## WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO BE CERTIFIED?

Certification is a way for your business to participate in projects funded with U.S. DOT funds. Certification gives groups that have historically been under-represented in the contracting industry a chance to participate on federally-assisted projects. Whether doing business with the Iowa DOT, transit agencies, airports, cities or counties, being a certified DBE may provide greater opportunity for business.

## WHAT IS THE UNIFIED CERTIFICATION PROGRAM (UCP)

Revised DBE program rules establishes a “one-stop” certifying location so firms do not have to apply with more than one agency to receive DBE certification. The Iowa DOT has been identified as the sole agency to certify firms as DBE for the state of Iowa. Once you are certified as a DBE by the Iowa DOT, your business is then recognized as a DBE firm by any Iowa business and/or agency using U.S. DOT funds in contracting.

## DOES A FIRM'S DBE CERTIFICATION GUARANTEE IT WILL BE AWARDED CONTRACTS?

No, it does not guarantee work to a firm. The DBE program is designed to assist the development of disadvantaged small businesses, and guarantee fair opportunities to compete for business with the Iowa DOT, transit agencies, airports, cities, counties and others who receive U.S. DOT funds. DBE firms/agencies are held to the same standards as non-DBE firms or agencies.

## WHERE CAN I OBTAIN AN APPLICATION?

For certification applications or additional information about the certification process, please contact the Iowa DOT's Office of Employee Services' Civil Rights Team at 515-239-1422, fax 515-817-6502, or email [DOT.CivilRights@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:DOT.CivilRights@dot.iowa.gov).

## DIRECTORY

A directory of certified DBE firms is published annually by the Iowa DOT, with amendments made during the year. Only DBE firms listed in the directory or current amendment are eligible to participate. The directory lists company names, addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, contact person and work type classification(s) of certified DBEs. The work types listed are not intended to limit your firm to only the work listed. The directory of certified firms and their work types can be found electronically at: [www.ia.bidx.com/lettings](http://www.ia.bidx.com/lettings).

## HOW CAN I CONDUCT BUSINESS WITH THE IOWA DOT?

The Iowa DOT currently has a highway contract letting monthly, every third Tuesday of the month, except for the month of January, when it will be held the fourth Tuesday of the month. Contact the Iowa DOT's Office of Contracts for details on the letting schedule at 515-239-1414.

## HOW CAN I CONDUCT BUSINESS WITH OTHER AGENCIES USING U.S. DOT FUNDS?

Transit agencies, airports, cities and counties periodically contract for construction projects, services or supplies using U.S. DOT funds. As a DBE, your firm may be contacted when contracting opportunities arise in your area. DBE firms may want to initiate contacts with agencies that use U. S. DOT funds to make them aware of the goods and services they are able to provide, and identify their firm/business as a certified DBE.

## WHERE CAN I RECEIVE DBE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE?

The Iowa DOT's Office of Employee Services' Civil Rights Team certifies for the entire state. Please contact a team member at 515-239-1422, fax 515-817-6502, or email [DOT.CivilRights@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:DOT.CivilRights@dot.iowa.gov) to receive assistance in the following areas.

- Preparation of the certification application.
- Information about how to obtain bidding documents and plans.
- Reading plans
- Dealing with contractors.
- Information about dealing with the Iowa DOT.
- Assistance in developing bonding, loan packages and financial statements.

For DBE assistance regarding FAA or FTA projects/activities, contact Iowa DOT Modal Division's Office of Aviation or Office of Public Transit at 515-233-7870.

## IOWA DOT EXTERNAL AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The Iowa DOT's Office of Employee Services' Civil Rights Team uses good-faith effort to ensure that DBEs have the maximum practical opportunity to obtain Iowa DOT contracts in the areas of construction, professional and technical services. The Iowa DOT also has taken specific affirmative action steps to ensure there is not discrimination in the awarding and administering of contracts. The department's DBE program is administered by the Office of Employee Services' Civil Rights Team. Authority for the DBE program is derived from, but is not limited to the following.

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and any amendments.
- SAFETEA-LU.
- 49 CFR 26 and any amendments.



**Iowa Department  
of Transportation**

Office of Employee Services' Civil Rights Team  
800 Lincoln Way  
Ames, IA 50010  
515-239-1422  
[www.iowadot.gov/civilrights](http://www.iowadot.gov/civilrights)



Federal and state laws prohibit employment and/or public accommodation discrimination on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, gender identity, national origin, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or veteran's status. If you believe you have been discriminated against, please contact the Iowa Civil Rights Commission at 800-457-4416 or Iowa Department of Transportation's affirmative action officer. If you need accommodations because of a disability to access the Iowa Department of Transportation's services, contact the agency's affirmative action officer at 800-262-0003.

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**Disadvantaged Business Enterprise**

*Question and answer guide*

**DBEQ&A**

