

# Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises Certification

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The Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) certifies small businesses owned and controlled by minority, women, and socially and economically disadvantaged persons.

## Why apply for certification?

When you become certified, you will be listed in our searchable directory that helps buyers locate firms:

### Certified Firms Directory

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OMWBE's Directory of Certified Firms will help buyers and contracting officers quickly locate and notify firms of upcoming procurement and contracting opportunities. When you search, you must also select at least one certification type.

- State and local agencies and some private companies look for state-certified firms to meet their supplier diversity goals. State certification also makes you eligible to apply for the [Linked Deposit Program](#), which can decrease interest rates on a small business loans by 2%.
- Projects funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), including highways, aviation, and transit, have mandatory goals for the inclusion of certified firms. Public entities that manage these projects and their prime contractors look to our directory for federally-certified firms.

New! OMWBE has a **short video** on **How To Apply for Certification**.  
[https://youtu.be/\\_qD2s95wO68](https://youtu.be/_qD2s95wO68)

You can apply online for one or both. If in doubt, call us or ask the entity you plan to do business with what certification you need.

## How do I know if I qualify for certification?

The OMWBE verifies your business is small, independent, and owned and controlled by a "socially and economically disadvantaged" person(s). Here is what that means:

1. Small business is based on two standards:
  - Your business' [North American Industry Classification System \(NAICS\) codes](#). OMWBE will assign NAICS codes according to the goods and services your business provides. Each NAICS code has a size limit listed in the federal Small Business Administration's [size standard table](#).
  - Your business's overall gross receipts may not exceed \$30.72 million over three years.
2. The primary owner(s) must be "socially and economically disadvantaged:"
  - Persons who are members of the following racial/ethnic groups and women are considered "socially disadvantaged" for the purposes of certification: Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, Native American, or Alaska Native.

- Other individuals may be found to be socially disadvantaged on a case-by-case basis, please call our office for more information.
- “Economically disadvantaged” generally means having a personal net worth less than \$1.32 million (not including your primary residence and your certified business). There are other standards, please call if you would like more detail.

3. Ownership, control, and independence:

- The eligible owner(s) must:
  - Own at least 51% of the business based on start-up costs.
  - Have experience directly related to the operations of the business.
  - Control the managerial and day-to-day operations and have the power to make independent decisions.
- The business must be able to independently perform the work to fulfill a contract.

**What kind of documents will I need to submit?**

The backup documents you will need to submit vary according to the type of business and ownership structure. The online application will walk you through what documents to upload in our secure system. Here is what you can expect:

To verify:	Commonly required documents:
Business is small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of filed and signed business federal tax returns (last three years if you have been in business that long).</li> <li>• If your business was started less than a year ago, a Profit and Loss Statement.</li> </ul>
Owner(s) are eligible for certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of documentation that shows U.S. citizenship or permanent legal residence, for federal certification only.</li> <li>• Personal net worth statement (form is online).</li> <li>• Last three years of filed and signed personal federal tax returns.</li> </ul>
Ownership, control, and independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business structure documents, such as a Partnership Agreement, LLC Agreement or Articles of Incorporation.</li> <li>• Current resumes for all eligible owner(s) and key personnel.</li> <li>• Documents to show your initial investment in the business, such as bank statements, loan agreements, or purchase and sale agreements.</li> <li>• Copy of signed rent or lease agreements for business, if applicable.</li> <li>• List of equipment owned, rented or leased in order to run your business.</li> <li>• If an established business, you will be asked for copies of contracts, bids and/or invoices to us assign the right NAICS codes.</li> </ul>

## How to apply

1. Go to OMWBE's web site and click the Certification tab: <https://omwbe.wa.gov/>
2. Choose *Apply for or Renew Certification* and follow instructions to create a secure account.
3. You can save your application and return to it later.
4. Follow instructions to pay your fee (\$25 to \$100 depending on certification).



## What to expect

State certification takes about 60 days and federal certification takes about 90 days after fee is received. Please call us with any questions as you are filling out your application.

- Within two weeks of receiving your fee, we will email you to let you know we have assigned your application to a certification analyst.
- Your assigned analyst will review your application and documents, and call you within two weeks with any questions or request for additional information.
- After your analyst has all the information, it takes about 4 to 6 weeks to analyze your file.
- If you are applying for federal certification, we will schedule an on-site visit.
- We will email you once we have made a final decision on your certification.
- Once approved, your business will appear in our online directory of certified firms.

### ***We are here to help***

Phone: 360-664-9750 | Toll-free 1-866-208-1064 | TTY 1-800-833-6384

Email: [TechnicalAssistance@omwbe.wa.gov](mailto:TechnicalAssistance@omwbe.wa.gov)

[www.omwbe.wa.gov](http://www.omwbe.wa.gov)

You can visit our office for in-person visits Tuesdays and Wednesdays:  
1110 Capitol Way South, Suite 150 | Olympia, WA 98501

We are open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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*OMWBE is committed to providing equal access to our services. If you need accommodation, please call 866-208-1064 or WA State Relay 711. We offer free telephone and in-person translation services.*