

Supplier Diversity Best Practices for State Agencies

Below are some best practices to increase participation of minority, woman, and veteran owned firms. The Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) is happy to discuss how these strategies can be used in your agency. We can include appropriate staff from the Department of Enterprise Service (DES).

For questions or help, please contact Elisa Young at elisay@omwbe.wa.gov or 360-664-9759.

1. Proactively identify your contracting and procurement needs. Early planning is the key to supplier diversity.

- Identify your agency's schedule of planned procurements for the biennium.
- If a schedule isn't available, review historical data to identify general categories of goods and services your agency regularly purchases. Your agency's response to questions one through four of the Procurement Risk Assessment report submitted to DES can help.
- Break down your needs by type of procurement:
 - Spend on master contracts using the [master contract sales database](#).
 - Spend on internal contracts.
 - Spend on direct buy purchases.

2. Review your procurement practices.

- Review how purchases are bundled and whether unbundling these contracts will create more inclusion opportunities.
- Understand your agency's [direct buy purchasing authority](#).
- Is it likely bidders will subcontract work? Consider requiring bidders to submit an inclusion plan, where the contractor is responsible to set goals, identify small and diverse vendors, and report on subcontractor spending with diverse vendors.
- Write solicitations and contracts in [plain talk](#), which assists all bidders.
- Review your agency's standard contract language and reevaluate any requirements that may be barriers for small businesses.

3. Identify diverse options for each category of spend.

- Use this [search tool](#) on DES' website to identify master contracts with diverse vendors.
- Use WEBS to identify all firms registered with DES. WEBS includes all certified veteran owned businesses. Businesses are able to self-identify as minority or woman owned, check OMWBE's directory to see if they are certified.
 - For help, review these [instructions](#) or see the [WEBS Vendor Search tutorial](#).
 - Try starting your search with broad commodity codes.

- Search the [OMWBE's directory](#) of certified minority and woman owned firms.
- 4. Conduct outreach.** If you cannot find a certified firm in your area of work, early planning will allow you to conduct market research and outreach.
- Contact certified minority, women, and veteran owned businesses and encourage them to bid.
 - Host, sponsor, or attend trade shows to inform small businesses of contracting opportunities. Check [OMWBE's web site](#) for upcoming events or call us.
 - Advertise contracting opportunities on [OMWBE's web site](#).
 - Develop a communication strategy to engage small businesses owned by minorities, women and veterans.
 - Know where to refer a business that wants to be certified by the OMWBE or the DVA. See this [multi-agency fact sheet](#) for more information.
- 5. Monitor.** Monitor your agency's spend with certified businesses throughout the year so you know what is working and can adjust your strategies as needed. You can access your agency's Supplier Diversity Report through [Enterprise Reporting](#).