WSDOT DBE NEWS

NOVEMBER 2014

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS RECEPTION

November 13, 2014

5 to 8 p.m.

Pier 66 – Seattle Maritime Event Center

The Port of Seattle, Sound Transit and Washington State Department of Transportation are proud to bring you the fifth annual Business After Hours Event! This event is for small, veteran, minority and women-owned firms to meet and establish relationships with prime contractors, consultants and agency staff, all in a casual and engaging atmosphere. This event includes an awards ceremony, networking opportunities with prime contractors and consultants, and refreshments. For more information or to register, please email DBESS@wsdot.wa.gov.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS…

Do you have ideas on how to improve the DBE Program or concerns that need to be addressed? Please send your questions, comments and suggestions to WSDOT Office of Equal Opportunity at DBESS@wsdot.wa.gov or call toll free (888) 259-9143.

Message from Secretary of Transportation Lynn Peterson

We've taken some important steps recently to strengthen our commitment to support small businesses and ensure a level playing field exists in our federally funded contracts. The Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program is one of the ways that WSDOT does this.

As a former small business owner, I understand the importance of small businesses. They are the engines that power economic development and prosperity for our state. We will continue to take steps to remove barriers and help socially and economically disadvantaged firms to succeed.

Our new newsletter is just one of the ways we are reaching out to DBE participants to share important news, developments and program changes; announce opportunities for training and technical assistance; and address issues of interest to small businesses. I encourage you to stay engaged and let us know how we're doing.

Kara Larsen joins WSDOT as Interim Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity

Kara Larsen, formally with the Office of the Attorney General, Labor and Personnel Division, has accepted the interim director position for WSDOT's Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO). Her experience includes working with state agencies on compliance with anti-discrimination laws and workforce development, and advising on reasonable accommodation issues under the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as sexual harassment, discrimination, and retaliation issues.

"I am very excited to join OEO and participate in the essential services it provides. I am committed to continuing the excellent work that OEO performs and seeking ways to enhance the effectiveness of our programs and services. I look forward to working with DBE program participants and the small business community on ways to improve our outreach efforts and support services so that every business has an equal opportunity to participate in the economic development of Washington state."

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Meet Henry Yates, Interim DBE Liaison Officer

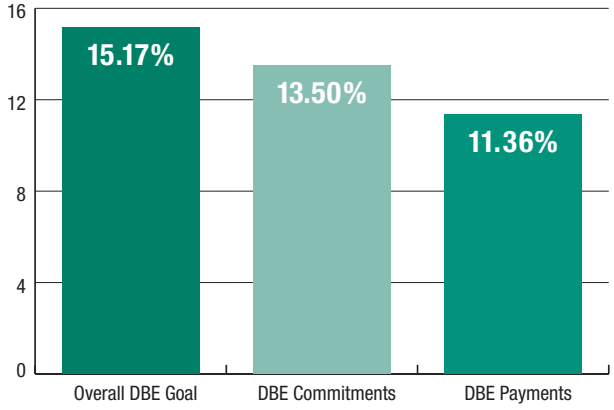
With more than 20 years of experience in government relations and community and constituent outreach, Henry Yates has agreed to serve as WSDOT's interim DBE Liaison Officer. He will work closely with Kara and other WSDOT divisions in this capacity. Since 2008, Henry has been president of Yates Consulting, conducting public affairs and government relations activities on the local, state and federal level.

In his role, he will work to enhance the administration of WSDOT's DBE Program on Federal Aviation Administration, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Adminsitration funded projects. "My highest priority is to make doing business with WSDOT easier for your company and to help as many people as possible benefit from the most sucessful implementation of the DBE Program nationwide."

Because you asked…

Q: What is WSDOT's current DBE participation?

A: As of October, WSDOT's Local Programs, Consultant Services, and Construction has attained 13.50 percent in DBE commitments (goals 11.40 percent and voluntary participation 2.10 percent) and 11.36 percent in DBE utilization in payments. WSDOT is still waiting on contract information and these numbers are subject to change until December 1.



Q: My firm is bidding on WSDOT work but has not yet been successful; where do I start?

A: WSDOT is launching a new Long Term Business Development Program targeting firms that have had limited success in obtaining work on projects. The program will provide eight weeks of classes and technical assistance.

You are eligible to participate if your firm:

- Has been in business for a minimum of three years
- Has had only one or no contracts with WSDOT
- Is committed to developing a strategic growth plan and receiving support services

For more information on how to enroll in this program, please contact Karen Armstead of Armstead Consulting, Inc. via email at karen@armsteadconsulting.com or via telephone at (425) 444-2618.

Q: What is the status of the Disparity Study and Waiver?

A: After the completion of the Disparity Study, WSDOT developed a proposed Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) overall DBE goal of 11.6 percent and submitted a waiver to remove Caucasian-women owned DBEs from the race-conscious portion of the DBE Program.

WSDOT submitted the proposals in March 2014. The proposed goal must be reviewed and approved by FHWA headquarters. The proposed waiver is presently being reviewed by the United State Department of Transportation. We've been informed, for some states, it has taken more than a year to have waivers approved. We do not know if that will be the case for WSDOT.

For more information regarding the Disparity Study and why WSDOT submitted a waiver, please visit our Disparity Study webpage: www.wsdot.wa.gov/EqualOpportunity/DisparityStudy/default.htm.

Q: I have heard about DBE Program Reform within WSDOT, what does that look like?

A: WSDOT is using a multi-faceted approach to increase the effectiveness of our DBE Program. We are working on nearly 40 different items to improve the implementation of the DBE Program. The major changes include increasing agency-wide accountability, creating an agency wide data reporting system will monitor payments and DBE attainment progress. We are also working on increasing the emphasis on the Small Business Enterprise and DBE Support Services Programs.

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