OMWBE Access Equity Open House
November 16, 2022
1:00pm-2:00pm

TIM KENNEY: Good afternoon. Welcome, everyone. Thank you for attending the Access Equity Open House. Let's go ahead and get started...so, first off, just to give you a heads-up, we are recording the meeting and we will be providing a link to this meeting, after the fact, so you can review it, along with the presentation. We also welcome your participation. If you have any questions, please feel free to use the question feature. To access this, you should have a little control panel and if you click on the orange arrow there, it'll give you the ability to enter questions into chat. We will go back to the Q&A, when we reach that portion after the rest of the presentation, and we'll answer questions in the order they were received.

Finally, we do have an ASL interpreter. You can mouse over and expand. We also have live captioning services. We are going to drop a link to the live caption in the chat here, in just a moment, so you should be able to access that, as well.

With us today, our presenters. So, we have the new director of OMWBE, Lekha Fernandez, who's also an Executive Sponsor. We have Sarah Erdmann, our Deputy Director, also an Executive Sponsor of the project. And Timolin Abrom.

My name is Tim Kenney and I'm the coordinator.

Just a quick agenda here, we're going to kick off with background on the need for change, followed on the background of the Access Equity project, itself. After that, we will get into some more details, sharing information about the system and some of the features that are included there and how they'll affect your agencies and

institutions. After that, we're going to cover what's coming next, our steps that are going to follow in 2023, and then we will end on a Q&A. So, again, if you have any questions, please feel free to drop those into the question in chat area and we'll answer those at the end of the presentation.

All right. And with that, I will pass it over to Lekha Fernandez, our director.

LEKHA FERNANDEZ: Thanks, Tim. Hello, everyone, my name is Lekha Fernandez and I recently joined the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises as the new director. Before we get started talking about Access Equity, I just want to take a moment and acknowledge the disruption that happened at our last week's meeting. For those who weren't out our first open house, we got Zoom-bombed. We apologize to everyone in attendance. Thank to our team members, Tim and Timolin, for handling it in the moment.

Next slide, please...

So, it is truly an exciting time to be here, as it's a time of pivotal change and I am looking forward to the good work our organizations are all going to be doing together. For the first time, in our State's history, Governor Inslee directed state agencies to center their 2011 through 2023 budgetary packages and legislative proposals around equity. Through this direction, the governor is putting agencies on a path to dismantle inequities in our systems and institutions, committing to a better life for all.

Successful and small, diverse businesses help make our economies and families better. This directive supports the work carried out by the Subcabinet for Business Diversity and aligned with Executive Order 22-01, Equity in Public Spending. EO 22-01 requires agencies to use Access Equity, which we'll get to in just a minute.

Next slide, please...

When we talk about dismantling inequities, we need to take a hard look at where we are. Washington is the number one state to live in according to US News & World Report. But we are still ranked 25th, right

in the middle of the pack, for opportunity. When it comes to public spending, we need to improve our numbers to increase opportunities for businesses that have historically been underutilized. Last year, our total track State spending, with minority-owned and women-owned dropped to 2.8%. This is low and there are a lot of factors at-play here. First, is the data accurate? Are we seeing the whole picture? Is this playing field level or are we missing opportunities to track spending, especially at the detailed subcontractor level where many minority and women-owned businesses operate.

We know that your resources are often stretched thin. In order to make the most of our time and energy, we need to work smarter and rely on tools that streamline some of our work. This is the goal with Access Equity. To improve our processes and how we collect data. There are many other things that need to happen. Prime contractors need to be held accountable for the way they spend State money. We need to make sure their outreach is equitable and inclusive.

What's in it for me? We know we need good data to make the right decisions, but what other advantages come from using small, diverse businesses? The answer is excellence. Many of these businesses have been working extremely hard and have overcome significant odds to get to where they are today. They are ready to compete and they just need the chance to prove what a good job they can do. Which is what we're asking you to consider in your daily work. So, thank you for joining us here today.

I'm going to pass it over to Sarah Erdmann, our Deputy Director and fellow Executive Sponsor, to give us background on Access Equity.

SARAH ERDMANN: Thank you, Lekha. Good afternoon, all. My name is Sarah Erdmann and I share Executive Sponsor of this project with Lekha. I'm going to cover a little bit of background around Access Equity today. This project is designed to be a foundational component to build our civil rights programs upon. Data collection is so, so very important to measure our efforts so we know if the strategies we're deploying are working. Washington's diversity is one of our greatest economic and cultural strengths. However, minority-owned and women-owned businesses have not

enjoyed equal access.

The Governor's Subcabinet on Supplier Diversity was developed to determine the level of disparity by small and diverse businesses in State contracts for Public Works and Goods and Services. The number one recommendation of the Disparity Study was to implement an electronic data collection and monitoring system for State agencies, as well as educational institutions, to fully-capture all their diverse spending. As stated, in the Disparity Study -- this is a direct quote, this first step must occur to enable other program elements to be targeted to actual needs and barriers. Failure to do so will undermine all other remedial program initiatives.

Next slide, please...

The Disparity Study provides statistical data demonstrating that minority and women-owned businesses do not enjoy equal opportunities. Governor Inslee swiftly responded with prioritizing Executive Order 22-01 to direct agencies to adopt the Tools for Equity and Access Equity. This executive order was issued in January of this year. The adoption is reaffirming requirements under State law. It's essential that we have a data and monitoring collection system in place so that we can track our progress.

OMWBE will provide training and change management support pre-adoption and post-adoption of Access Equity.

Next slide, please...

Before we get any further, here is some high-level information about Access Equity and how you will use the system. First, you can access it through our website. This is the same software platform that we use to host our Directory of Certified Businesses. New functionality has been added for agencies and educational institutions to enter contracts and conduct outreach to make certified minority-owned and women-owned businesses aware of your contracting opportunities. This will replace the current method of reporting subcontractor spending via Excel spreadsheet. As a reminder, collecting and reporting this data that your spend with women and minority-owned businesses, reconfirmed by Executive Order 22-01.

However, it's traditionally been done by OMWBE [audio cutting out]. Many of you may be familiar with this process and might currently be preparing your data for submission to OMWBE.

Each fall, OMWBE requests the data from you, so the change is really around how this data is collected rather than a manual process, there will now be a system to enter the data in realtime. Tracking millions of dollars via Excel is not sustainable for OMWBE and really not for you, either. This will allow more time to focus on your inclusion efforts rather than tracking spend manually.

Next slide, please...

So, this system, Access Equity, is being implemented as part of a forward-thinking effort to modernize and standardize enterprise data collection and reporting. In addition to streamlining the reporting process, for diversity spending, Access Equity will provide you will automated tools to identify and perform outreach to small and diverse businesses to share your opportunities. In addition to taking a first-step towards streamlining data reporting, Access Equity will track contracts to that subcontractor level. Also, access to information was identified as a barrier in the statewide Disparity Study R. DES addressed outreach and this system will help to provide you with a tool to communicate with the certified vendor community about your opportunities and your active solicitations and of course, driving those vendors back to use WEBS. This is absolutely any type of replacement for WEBS. It also has functionality and invite vendors.

The last several years to shine a necessary light on in many inequities experienced by the communities we serve. We all must continue to be change agents. Thank you for taking the first step towards adopting this system and supporting future implementation by all of your colleagues and other public agencies.

With that, I'll turn it over to Timolin Abrom, Assistant Director of Supplier Diversity, to discuss more about this project and its benefits.

TIMOLIN ABROM: Thank you, Sarah. You may be wondering by now,

what exactly is a subcontractor? Well, a subcontractor is someone who is
performing all or part of those services under a contract through a
separate contact with the contractor. You may also be asking yourself, do
we even work with subcontractors? The answer might surprise you. Here
are two examples of subcontractors. In areas where they may not be
expected. So, the amazing team assisting with implementation of Access
Equity is a perfect example. OMWBE contracted with Onit Management
Consulting to provide expertise, but some of their consultants on the Onit
team are, in fact, subcontractors. My second example is that you may have
been an RP for information technology and you're really looking for a web
developer, but in your scope of work, there's a small piece that is asking
for application development. And the Prime does not have that expertise.
They would go out and contract with another vendor to perform -- to
perform that service.

        And, quick note, just remember that only subcontractors that are
OMWBE-certified [audio cutting out]. To add, I'd like to encourage you
all that if -- we're working with a minority-owned or women business, to
encourage them to certified so that we can count their spend.

        Next slide...

        Now, let's look at some of the benefits that Access Equity will
bring. Automated data collection and reporting, Access Equity will
provide an online portal for electronic submission of State contract spend
or contractors with subcontractors. Data standardization and error
reduction. It will increase data capture and reduce the amount of time
spent on data-cleaning efforts.

        It will improve business outreach. It will help public agencies
and institutions of higher education to share bidding opportunities with
small and diverse businesses.

        It will also allow us to have a realtime access to diverse
spending reports. It enables accurate, customizable reporting for
increased equity. This will allow Washington to close its equity gap
faster and permit prompt responses to data request by agencies,
legislatures, stakeholders and the public.

Next slide...

So, OMWBE is working with B2Gnow to implement the Access Equity system. B2Gnow is a nationally-recognized business-to-government software provider that automates data gathering, tracking, reporting and vendor management. B2Gnow also maintains OMWBE's Directory of Certified Businesses. This turn-key solution significantly reduces staff time and cost, allowing us to focus on helping public agencies meet their diversity goals.

B2Gnow meets the guidelines provided by the One Washington and is being used by the Department of Enterprise Services, Public Works, Washington State Department of Transportation, City of Seattle, Port of Seattle and Sound Transit. So contractors working with these departments are already familiar with this system and have vendor accounts, which will help make the transition easy for the businesses.

Access Equity also includes several modules that will be training your teams to use in the coming months. Beginning with contract compliance, outreach and event management. And later on, we will be introducing a go-plan module for your team.

Next slide...

Now, you might be thinking, this all sounds great, in theory, but how does it work in practice? So let's look at the ways that the contract compliance and the outreach modules are used...so, when you're agency or institution carries out any contract for goods and services and public works, it involves subcontractors. Those contract details must be input into the Contract Compliance modules. This way, once everyone is entering their data, we will have a clear picture of the percentage of public dollars going to underrepresented businesses. We already track this data at the Prime contractor level, but our estimates show a significant number of certified businesses that we are not counting because they are not being included in the data. This is a huge gap that we need to close and we need your help to do it.

This is also the option for agencies to update their contract language that Primes are required to report on their subcontractor

spending. This is a good way to ensure the tracking burden doesn't fall squarely on the shoulders of your staff. Now let's talk about outreach. When you conduct a competitive solicitation, you probably have a few go-to options for getting the word out. You, of course, are using WEBS so that vendors in the system will get notified about new projects in their industry. You can also conduct outreach by email, which we have helped many of our organizations use. The trick there is making sure your outreach is inclusive, which means getting the word out to the diverse vendor community. What we are providing with the outreach module is a one-stop shop that will let you reach all of the certified minority and women-owned in Washington. You can reach them now, but you have to go to our public directory, do a filtered search, export your results and import them into your mailing system. That's just way too many steps.

The outreach module lets you set up vendor lists so you can locate businesses you want to reach and email them from the same interface. Access Equity will track all of the engagement data so you can get reports on how many businesses opened your outreach emails and responded.

Next slide...

There are four main profiles for your staff members, as users, depending on their roles that they perform with their job duties. Each agencies can have up to two Agency Admins, they will act as Change Agents and help with on and offboarding. They will enter contracts and vendor information into the system and perform quality control to make sure data is entered correctly.

An outreach manager will maintain vendor lists [audio cutting out] and perform direct outreach. I want to pause here for a second, because I have a background in contracts and procurement and the outreach module, in this example, is actually the contract specialist. So I just really wanted to make that really clear. So, Primes and subcontractors will have profiles in the system, making it easier for them to learn about bidding opportunities and more accurate for agencies entering data. OMWBE will provide training for agency and college admins to assist with user

account creation and system access.

So, I will return it back to Tim. Thank you very much and we are so excited that you're here.

Tim, we cannot hear you.

TIM KENNEY: Timolin, thank you so much. I'm so sorry for that. In January of 2023, we are entering the Phase I launch of the Access Equity project. For Phase I, several large universities and agencies have been working with us for the past year and this is when they'll begin entering their contract data for fiscal year 2023. We will be reaching out to you, after the beginning of the new year, with a timeline on what's coming with Access Equity implementation, how it will affect your agencies and institutions and just what you can expect down the road.

So, with that, if you would also like to stay up-to-date on Access Equity and Supplier Diversity news, in general, we recommend you subscribe to our Supplier Diversity Newsletter. We have a list of the certified businesses. If you received our November newsletter, you'd get the list of the businesses that were certified in October. We share updates on the toolkit workshops we've been hosting over the past two years. Tomorrow, we are wrapping up our 2022 outreach toolkit workshop and then we will be sharing more information about what's to come in 2023. So you can stay-tuned over the next couple months. We'll probably be sharing that new schedule with you.

The Access Equity updates are included in the Supplier Diversity newsletter. We'll also be reaching out to you directly.

All right. And with that, we have actually reached the Q&A section. So, we've received a few questions, so far...and, my coworker, Doug Mora, our toolkit manager, is going to help us go through these questions today and we'll start responding to them in the order that we receive them. So I'm just going to read them out loud and then we'll respond, too.

So, first off, it looks like we have a question from Erin Lopez. Do OMWBE firms that are Prime contractors report subcontractor data? So, Doug, do you have a thought on that one or someone you'd like to pass to?

DOUG MORA: Yeah, I'll give this a shot and hope for support from the rest of the OMWBE team. But, my understanding is, yes, the OMWBE will do just like any other Prime that has subs, will enter that -- will report subcontractors.

TIM KENNEY: That could be when the subcontractor is a certified business, but it could also be when there's a subcontractor, in general. This way, we'll collect all of the subcontractor data and we'll actually be able to see the utilization percentages. Kind of in the same way we're doing with the primary contract tracking right now.

All right. We have another question, excuse me if I screw up anyone's name. For Jeannette. How is your outreach going to be different with this new system, that is different from using the OMWBE and DES directory? Doug, I'll turn that over to you as our outreach person.

DOUG MORA: Great. This one I can answer with a little more confidence and the answer is, the outreach module will be able to supplement what you've been doing with your existing outreach. You'll be able to send emails to lists of certified vendors. That can be in addition to sending it to OMWBE, to post on our Bids and Opportunities page and any other resources that DES or other agencies might offer.

TIM KENNEY: All right. Thank you, Doug. We got another question here, Erin Lopez. So, some of these may have been answered in the chat, also. But, just going to read it out loud here. So, this question was, can OMWBE firms opt out of receiving marketing emails? Yes, they can. Businesses can opt out of receiving those communications through Access Equity. If that's the case, they just receive the important certification information. Yes, they do have the ability to opt out.

And then another question, Erin, thank you again. This is, what date are agencies required to implement subcontractor reporting? And, Doug, do you have an answer there? I know that our timeline -- we will be sharing more information about the actual adoption timeline for most of the agencies and individuals who are in the room with us today. But do you anything you want to say to that, as well?

DOUG MORA: No, that's the answer, Tim. We are identifying which agencies are going to be in the next cohort and it'll [Away from mic] next calendar year. So, stay-tuned and we'll keep information coming in.

TIM KENNEY: I think for right now, it's just the Phase I agencies that we have a hard date on when we start entering their contracts and that's in January. Around the same time, we'll be reaching out to everyone else with an updated timeline and in next steps you can expect.

And then another question from Erin. Are all types of subcontractors required to submit? For example, every Office Depot, Tier Ii supplier, like a $5 pencil manufacturer. Doug, do you have an answer on that?

TIMOLIN ABROM: I actually have an answer. Can I jump in? We worked really close with our partners, DES, on what we would lead the effort and we decided that goods would be out of scope until we really did more research. So right now, we are just focusing on public works and services.

TIM KENNEY: All right. Thanks so much, Timolin. And we have another question, here, from Sharon. Will this correlate with the One Washington contract database? Maybe that's a Timolin or Sarah question, if someone wants to jump in?

SARAH ERDMANN: I will jump in. We are working closely with the One Washington project to ensure there's not any duplication in the functionality of B2Gnow. And so, the system will -- I think it's still to be determined and how B2Gnow and One Washington will interact.

TIM KENNEY: All right. And our next question. Sarah, this one might be for you, as well. This is also from Erin Lopez. How much lead time will an agency have for training? I know some of those timelines are still being determined for all of the agencies and institutions that will come after Phase I.

Sarah, do you have any input on that? How much lead time they'll receive in the implementation process?

SARAH ERDMANN: I can share a little bit about thoughts behind Phase II and beyond. We'll be looking at agencies who do their own public works, so that could be obviously colleges and agencies that do public works and agencies that have the highest spend, will be implemented first and we'll keep prioritizing in that way and interacting with agencies and determining their readiness, as well.

TIM KENNEY: All right. Thank you so much. Looks like our next question, I think Doug may have answered this in the chat already. [Audio cutting out] was from Shannon. It was, do you have the Phase I agencies listed somewhere? We have Central Washington University, Department of Corrections, Department of Enterprise Services, department of Transportation, University of Washington, Washington State Healthcare Authority and Washington State University. They have a significant amount of State spending.

We have a follow-up question, from Julie. Who are the Phase II agencies and how many phases are there? Sarah, maybe that's one that you'd want to answer, as well? Or if anyone else on the team wants to jump in?

SARAH ERDMANN: Phase II and beyond agencies are still to be determined and it's -- I think we're -- after Phase Ii, it's everyone else so we're not breaking it up into additional phase. It'll be based on spend, if the agency does their own public works and working with agencies that are ready to go.

TIM KENNEY: All right. Thanks. Sarah, stay ready. I think I've got another one coming your way in a second. Erin Lopez and Shannon said, thanks for answers the questions. You're welcome.

We've requested additional staff to comply with these requirements. We may not have resources available until July of 2023? Is this okay? Sarah, I thought this might be a good one for you, too.

SARAH ERDMANN: I think that question might be best as we determine which agencies are next. If the readiness isn't quite there, you might be in a later phase. This requirement to provide the data is not new and so there should be existing staff that perhaps were already

reporting that subcontractor data up through OMWBE and that Excel spreadsheet so we're really looking at instead of reporting that way, reporting through the system.

TIM KENNEY: All right. Thank you. I think this might be another one for you, Sarah. Do we have an estimated start date for Phase II agencies? I'm going to assume by "start date," we're currently approaching the Phase I launch. Assuming that it's that, do we have any sort of estimate for the Phase II agencies? I know it's a little bit up in the air now.

SARAH ERDMANN: The project schedule stops at Phase I, so, we'll be implementing Phase I. We want to see how it goes for 30 days. I don't anticipate Phase II [No audio].

TIM KENNEY: All right. Thank you so much. Well, it looks like that's all of the questions that we have received right now. I will take a little pause, here, just in case anyone wants to write any additional questions in here. So you do have some time to go through that.

And, looks like -- sounded like maybe Sarah cut out a little bit. So, I think -- I think the answer, there, was that we will be in touch about the individual, like, agency readiness and what will be happening with Phase II and beyond with that whole group so if you want to just wait, we will be in contact with everyone who's been in attendance today, when we have more project details to share, after the start of the new year.

So, Julie asked that question. I hope that answered that for you. And then, while we're giving it just another couple minutes, here, for people to put in any remaining questions before we wrap-up, you know, we've had some questions about impacts to agencies. Do any of you have any other concerns about impacts to your staff? We recognize that agencies are all different sizes. Some of you have, you know, contract and procurement departments and some of you are probably individuals handling this. If you're in a smaller agency. So, you know, that's one thing to consider. We've gone over some of the timeline, so you can expect us to share more of that information with you, as well.

And, I'm not seeing any other questions coming in right now. So, I'm going to move to our final slide, here.

TIMOLIN ABROM: Timolin, can I add something really quickly? Thank you so much. So, working on the project are folks that -- within OMWBE -- that have contracting and procurement experience. I, for one, put together our report for my previous agency, so we've been really thoughtful and intentional not making this a huge burden for you all. We -- you know, gone through the ringer trying to make it as easy as possible. But because I did this work, I promise you, it's going to be so much easier. It's not going to take as many staff as you're probably thinking now. But I think you will see a huge, positive impact once this is implemented. Thank you.

TIM KENNEY: Thanks, Tim. Yeah, on our team, too, we do have some change management professionals, as well. The change impacts to your agency, we recognizing that changing processes is always hard. We're hoping it's a positive change and will make it easier in the long-run.

I went to our previous slide because we have a few more questions coming in. Just to clarify, we're not focused on implementing this for goods at the moment. Timolin, do you want to answer that one?

TIMOLIN ABROM: That is correct. But we will be working with the Subcabinet in the future, on how we could possibly go that direction. But right now, we have so many things to work out, I think it was kind of demonstrated in Erin's question in regards to Office Depot. We're trying to work through some bugs.

TIM KENNEY: All right. Thank you. And our next question's from Julie. What if multiple staff are sitting in on the same Zoom meeting? How can they get the information and credit for attending today if they joined in with someone else? I think I can answer that. We're tracking our attendance list. You're welcome to email us. If you're excited about this project or let us know who we should be contacting as your organization, I'll move to the next slide, really quick, because it actually contains our contact info. You can email us at accessequity@omwbe.wa.gov.

We had one more question here, will there be vendor education? Will this include clarity between direct and indirect subcontractor data? I've heard small businesses wanting to report small spend, which usually isn't allowable. Timolin, is that a question for you? Not sure who, on our team, wants to take that one. And I can repeat it if you need me to.

TIMOLIN ABROM: Can you go ahead and repeat it?

TIM KENNEY: No, I'll just read through it again. Will there be vendor education? Clarity between direct and indirect contractor data. Small businesses want to report in direct spend, which usually isn't allowable.

TIMOLIN ABROM: Erin, we have to hook up on this because we will be reaching out to the vendor community. I think it's very important for us to have that conversation, but I really want to sit down with you because I want to hear some of the feedback you're receiving because we really want to kind of mitigate any issues on the vendor side, as well, not just for agencies. So, let's check-in.

TIM KENNEY: It looks like Erin had a follow-up, indirect spend would include things like accounting and marketing spending not tied to the contract. So, yeah, it sounds like -- uh-huh. And then Erin used to manage a lot of vendor and subcontractor data reporting. Sorry, Timolin. Go ahead.

TIMOLIN ABROM: That's okay. Usually when -- let's say someone is responding to an RFP, there's a contract in place, they build in those costs into their bid. Right. So we will be capturing that, but [audio cutting out] the total amount of the contract. It won't be broken down in any way. But they usually are really good at building those types of things into the cost of running business, into their contract price.

TIM KENNEY: And Erin, just so you don't have to type again, if you actually had a verbal response, I'm just going to let you unmute here. So, if you want to speak up and respond, you're welcome to unmute yourself and just chime in. Just want to make sure that we're addressing your questions.

>> Sure. And we can talk offline. But there's different

methodologies for reporting what's called an indirect rate, a direct contract would be the example for provided earlier, I'm doing a big IT project, I'm going to contract the website. That indirect rate of an allocation percent, that depending on the funding source, there's different rules. Not to bore everybody online, but it can confuse some of the small businesses and they're only operated one or two of the funding services. We can chat more offline. Sorry about all that information.

TIMOLIN ABROM: No, that's great and helpful. Thank you, Erin.

TIM KENNEY: All right. And then we had one more question come in from Julie. Is this requirement for only competitive bids? So, Timolin, maybe that's one for you, as well?

TIMOLIN ABROM: Yes. It is competitively-bid contracts. Or -- let me -- let me hop in there for a second...there may be a direct-buy contract under certain dollar threshold that may have a subcontractor on it so I don't want to say, um...to ignore those. I want you to include any contract that has a subcontractor. But we really are focusing on competitively-bid contracts.

TIM KENNEY: All right. Thanks for the answer. And then, you know, just so everyone knows, there will be a lot of time for us to go over some of these questions, in detail, once we're actually working together in the implementation process. So, these are some really good questions and we're saving all of these so that we can respond to them later, you know, and make sure that's publicly-available and we'll factor those into our FAQ, as well. We will be able to get an answer to any of these questions and if anything's unclear, you'll definitely be hearing from us in 2023.

Looks like we got one more question. This is from Karen. As a contract specialist, I hear from many businesses that are Veterans Affairs, women-owned, minority-owned and are not certified with OMWBE. How can we ensure more small, diverse vendors are going through certification. I think I can actually answer part of that and then I'll leave it open if Doug wants to respond, as well. Because Doug is our toolkit manager so if you go to our website, you can access the Tools for

Equity. So, within our toolkit, we have a whole section of tools on outreach and one of the things that's built into there is, you know, different steps you can take. Let's say you -- you know, you did your due diligence, your went to our directory, you searched for certified businesses in the industry you're looking for. We would welcome you to share that information with us because it's really helpful when we can identify gaps, you know, either by industry or, let's say, geographic region, where State agencies wouldn't actually be able to locate a contractor or a subcontractor.

So, all that information is very useful and then, Doug, do you have anything else you want to add there, since you're the owner of the toolkit on our side?

DOUG MORA: Sure, one more plug for the outreach workshop tomorrow. Sign up for that on our website.

And, I think the question really connects to how can you provide some information or verbiage to businesses to encourage them to get into the certification process. And, I am unable to find it right now, in the moment, but I have some great language -- actually, I think shared from Erin. Some wording a while back, that encourages vendors to get certified. So, I will dig that up and share that with Tim and see how we can get out. I'll share that with the outreach workshop tomorrow, too.

Timolin's going to help me out, too.

TIMOLIN ABROM: Yes, I am.

[Laughter].

Yes, I am. So, I really just wanted to add that I received an amazing example from OFM. They contracted with a couple of businesses that weren't certified and they have a standard letter that they send out to these businesses that say, hey, you need to get certified. This is the information. If you're interested in that, I can have that -- or seeing that -- I can have that included in any packaging that we send out after this.

TIM KENNEY: All right. Thank you, Doug and Timolin, for answering. Karen said, that would be great and thank you so much. Glad I

could pronounce your name correctly. Yeah, we will be reaching out with
some of that information. If there's ever anything that you need from us,
too, you know, let us know if you need some of that -- you know --
marketing material for OMWBE or a little blurb you can include in an email
when you're responding to a vendor that might be eligible for
certification.

    We got a couple other questions coming in here. Anne asked,
will you be keeping track of vendors who are waiting for certification
approval, who are utilized in agency contracts so that the agency gets
credit? That's a really good question. Maybe that's one for Sarah or for
Timolin? And I can repeat the question, too, if that's helpful.

    TIMOLIN ABROM: Yes, please do.

    TIM KENNEY: Will you be keeping track of vendors who are
waiting for certification approval, who are utilized in agency contracts
so the agency gets credit? If you realize someone could get certified and
count towards a goal but you're already about to contract with them, if
they're in that period where they're waiting to actually get certified,
can they be included in the agency goal? Do you know the answer to that
one, Timolin?

    TIMOLIN ABROM: Yeah, I was going to let Sarah chime in because
I would think that they would truly need to be certified before their
spend is counted. But I really would like to have more discussion on --
on that. But they really, truly need to be certified. Sarah?

    SARAH ERDMANN: You are correct, Timolin. The system is
designed to basically, you enter your contracts and it's connected with
our Directory of Certified Businesses. So it's going to do some magic,
behind had scenes. You enter the contract, the vendor and it'll bump up
to the directory and say, yeah, certified; or, no, not certified. I think
this is really worth some discussion, though, around planning and
forecasting so that when we but our solicitations out, we're giving
businesses plenty of time to get certified prior to the contract being
awarded.

    TIM KENNEY: All right. Thank you so much. And then we had a

couple other comments in here, not questions. Telling us that that
document would be really useful, so I think that's referring to maybe the
email template language, to encourage a business to get certified. So,
since I'll be publishing these materials to share with you after the
webinar's concluded, I'll make sure we include something like that so
anyone here today has something to grab and throw into an email in case
the situation arises. If you have questions apart from that, you're
welcome to reach out to us, as well. We're happy to work with you to get
more businesses certified. If you want to aid us in that goal, we
appreciate it.

Then we have one more in here. Let's see...hang on one
second...this is also from Julie. Is the process to be certified going to
be leaned up? I've been told it's very time-consuming and lengthy process
from a few vendors and thank you so much. Sarah, I'll pass that to you on
the certification thing. Are we doing anything to make the process more
lean or efficient or easier for businesses to get certified?

SARAH ERDMANN: I think that's a great question and we are
constantly looking at areas where we can [Away from mic] adding value in
the certification process rather than a barrier. We always welcome
feedback so if you're hearing things from certain vendors about pinch
points, we'd love to hear what they are. So, was the paperwork too much?
Which particular paperwork? It's really helpful to us to have more
specifics so we can really look at those areas. But it's a constant
question around improving the process and we're always looking at areas we
can improve, for sure, and shorten those timelines, as well, on how long
it takes to get certified.

TIM KENNEY: All right. Thank you so much. Looks like we have
another couple questions in here and we still have about eight more
minutes, so we're keeping things right on-track. So, from Megan Clark,
are the spend amounts not collected with the transparency report that
shows how spend is allocated throughout the year? So that would allow
agencies to have pending OMWBE contractors that are eventually certified
throughout the contract. Right? And Megan, because this is kind of a

two-parter, I'm going to our guest list and I will give you the option to chime in if you want. So, I've unmuted you but if you want to go and click "unmute yourself," do you want to tell us your question again and then we'll try to get an answer for it?

>> This was more in relation to how the -- how the diversity spend is calculated because the transparency reports that we submit to DES, I know that's not the same. Those collect the information and count at the end of the year, how much spend went to each diverse group or certified business. And so, I'm just wondering why the numbers calculated would be different. If a vendor signs up with a pending status and then we eventually -- they eventually get approved, wouldn't that still be counted because it's all collected at the end of the year?

TIM KENNEY: Sarah, do you want to take that one, too?

SARAH ERDMANN: Um, I'm not sure if I'm the right person to answer this question. I will say the intent of the system is to capture data in realtime. So, as a contract is awarded, it would be set up in the system and then throughout the life of the contract, I'm imagining -- Timolin, help me out here -- if multiple subs are throughout that contract, at any point, a vendor could be counted. They must be certified at the time they're awarded the contract.

Timolin, help me out here.

[Laughter].

TIMOLIN ABROM: Yes, no. You did great. That's exactly it. I do want to go back on the -- on Erin's, just for a quick second. I did receive information from [Indiscernible] on indirect spend and she says that we are only collecting data for contract -- any contract, at this point. We are working on a future project spend analysis that will include all spends. That was in regards to Erin's question, in regards to indirect spend.

TIM KENNEY: All right. Well, thank you, both, for answering. I can remember one example where we were contracting with one of the businesses we certify and midway through that, he identified someone else who could provide a service to us, so it wasn't handled as a subcontract,

it was a separate contract. But, you know, that business actually got certified in the process and then we ended up completing the contract with them, after they were certified. So, I'm not sure if that helps, but that's kind of a real-life scenario that we engaged in a year or two ago.

We have another couple questions here. One from Jack. Is it going to be easier to search for vendors by commodity type or of service provided? Doug, you want to take that one for outreach?

DOUG MORA: Sure. I'm glad you asked that, Jack, because the search on the -- inside the Access Equity system is similar to what's on the public site. You can limit by ZIP code, by example. We're also finding some tips and tricks, like keyword search and [Indiscernible] drill-downs, kind of options to help make the search easier. One of the good things, too, is you'll be able to save your search results. So, stay-tuned. Hopefully we'll see you at our next info session when we get more detailed. I'm glad you're thinking along those lines, though.

TIM KENNEY: Thanks, Doug. You can search our directory right now. Once you're in Access Equity, you're going to have more powerful tools at your disposal so we're hoping that that will be helpful to everyone.

And then, we had another question here. Sarah, I think this one might be coming your way. This is -- excuse me, from Jeffrey. Have you considered making registration and renewal free to vendor to ensure equity and more participation? I think we're talking about making the zero cost to apply for certification or to renew your status.

SARAH ERDMANN: That is a really great question because we do collect fees and that is how we, in part, [Away from mic] however, in our decision packages, this year, we did request funding that would allow OMWBE to eliminate the fees and so if that is funded, starting July 1, 2023, if that is funded, we would be able to stop charging and collecting fees on certification.

TIM KENNEY: Sarah, we had a follow-up just of what the initial costs are right now. Do you remember those, off-hand?

SARAH ERDMANN: I do, for a disadvantaged business enterprise,

for the USDOT certification program, it is $25 for your initial certification and $20 annually to -- you're required to submit paperwork to OMWBE that you're still eligible on an annual basis. $25 for a new application, $20 for the process. For the State, it's $50 to $100 based on the business structure. So. Sole props are $50, [Indiscernible] are $75 and LLC or corporation is $100 and the renewal is the same cost and that is every three years, versus every year that the USDOT program runs.

TIM KENNEY: Thanks, Sarah. I think we have time for one more question before we wrap-up. Some of the information about certification is included on our website. We have all of the information in more detail there. This one was, does OMWBE recognize similar vendor certification from other states? So, I thought maybe Sarah or Timolin, that would be for you. And then we'll close out after that.

SARAH ERDMANN: Another great question around certification. For the USDOT program, there is interstate certification. If you're certified in your home state, wherever you reside, you send the paperwork [Away from mic] and it's an abbreviated process. For the State program, we do not have reciprocity [Away from mic] in our certification program, looking at [Indiscernible] through the SBA and other, maybe partner states, like Oregon, we've started having discussions with so once we can get some traction there, we might be able to expand it to other states, as well.

TIM KENNEY: All right. Thanks, Sarah. Your mic went a little quiet, but basically, we're working towards this. We're looking for any opportunities we have to partner with other states to improve the process.

But with that, you know, we've reached 2:00 so we are going to close out here. Thank you, everyone, so much for joining us today. This was a really exciting question and answer question for us. I'm sorry we couldn't get to all the questions. But stay-tuned. We're going to email everyone so you'll have access to this recording, the PowerPoint presentation and we'll answer any of the other questions we weren't able to get to today. Thank you so much. And with that, we're going to close out. I hope you all have a great rest of your day.