



## Workshop Q&A – March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Are we are not supposed to share or provide the prospective vendors with a copy of our solicitation document during the outreach phase until it is posted at the WEBS to ensure that no vendors receive unfair advantage?

That is correct: you cannot give information to anyone before it is widely available. You can, however, send the information to businesses in your distribution list and direct them to WEBS for more details.

For our district, in most cases, the larger companies on contracts are cheaper. How can we document that we are paying a bit more in order to meet the Executive order?

The ideal option is to record the rationale behind your decision in notes or free-text fields in the software application that you use to manage procurement. If that is not possible, you can track this in a spreadsheet or word document. Be sure to retain information about the procurement to be prepared to respond to questions, such as the date of the purchase, the price difference, and the need to comply with EO 22-01 and/or DES Policy. Example language: I used an OMWBE-certified vendor in order to meet the expectations of EO 22-01. The certified vendor's price was X% higher, resulting in a cost of \$X more than the other vendor.

What do you anticipate collaboration on outreach will look like?

DES seeks input from agencies when establishing Statewide Contracts to ensure that we are not making duplicate efforts or overwhelming businesses with multiple contacts. We encourage agencies to share, collaborate, and coordinate on their outreach efforts.

OMWBE's Supplier Diversity Team can assist agencies with searching for certified businesses, developing content for email messages, and using Access Equity's Outreach Module when it is available to your agency.

The bulk of presentation appears to be in regards to Competitive Solicitations, is there Outreach guidance regarding day to day procurements? We have 5 days to complete and most of the guidance today has been in weeks for a timeline.

Yes. Targeted Industry Outreach is required for noncompetitive purchases to find small and/or veteran-owned businesses to meet an agency need. This outreach requires, at a minimum, searching WEBS; it can also include market research, discussions with industry groups, research with Chambers of Commerce, discussions with business resource groups (BRGs), and searches of the OMWBE directory of certified firms. More guidance can be found in the DES Supplier Diversity Handbook and the [OMWBE Toolkit for Outreach](#).



For procurements on a short timeline in which you are not putting out an RFP or posting for bids, first check for a small minority, woman, or veteran owned business within a relevant Statewide Contract. If one is not available, you can search OMWBE's registry and WEBS to look for a business (OMWBE Toolkit for Outreach) and contact them for pricing. This will take a little more time so take your workload and amount of the purchase into consideration for prioritizing.

## How do you post a draft RFP to WEBS?

There is no "official" way to post a Draft RFP to WEBS yet, but we recommend posting the draft RFP as an RFI, preferably with a small survey or methodology that promotes feedback from the vendor community.

## How do we register for WEBS since the inactive vendors need to be reviewed also?

We learned that to see inactive vendors, you also need to have admin status - so a request to review inactive vendors will have to be sent to your agency's WEBS admin. But to register for WEBS, please obtain your supervisor's authorization, and then contact WEBS customer Support to start the registration process: [webscustomerservice@des.wa.gov](mailto:webscustomerservice@des.wa.gov)

## Does DES have a "Sourcing Team" that is charged with identifying applicable vendors for services? Do other agencies have a similar group?

DES typically forms a Sourcing Team that consists of personnel from other agencies (typically current purchasers) for each Competitive Solicitation to assist with specific subject matter expertise. DES does not have a "standing" sourcing team group as the subject matter expertise required varies wildly with each solicitation. The methodology typically allows the Contract Specialist to leverage broader subject matter expertise than is available just at DES, and to specialize/focus more on fair, equitable procurement solutions. DES believes that other agencies use a similar approach, though likely keeping the sourcing team within their own agency.

## What outreach has OMWBE done with DEI managers?

OMWBE is working with agency contacts to ensure that their agencies are using the toolkit as required by EO 22-01. We assessed each agency's use of the toolkit last year and will follow up in 2023 to identify who we need to work with to expand efforts as needed. In some cases, agency DEI program managers are heavily involved; other agencies have assigned leadership in the procurement process to work with us on improving equity in public spending.

## Is there an ability to recognize the Amazon identified small/diverse/OMWBE business as counting towards the requirement?

No. Amazon's vendor vetting system isn't as rigorous as OMWBE's, and although it provides some data, it is not sufficient for the State to consider as it reviews agencies' spending under the EO 22-01 and Supplier Diversity requirements. As a part of its response to the Disparity Study recommendations,



OMWBE and DES are reviewing the spend reporting process for improvements and are moving towards comprehensive statewide spend reporting.

Is there a link to the DES Supplier Diversity Policy handbook?

Yes: [DES Supplier Diversity Policy Handbook](#)

Many of the small (mini/micro in our case) businesses are not in WEBS, those one-person businesses do not always have the capacity to deal with multiple platforms.

WEBS is the official source of bid information for Washington State. That said, you are absolutely correct that many businesses are not in WEBS. Because of this there is increased value in conducting targeted solicitation outreach, which will help getting firms registered in WEBS which in turn will alert them about Washington State bid opportunities. DES regularly encourages such businesses to register in WEBS, and to sometimes provide publicly available bid information, with the caveat that WEBS is still the official source of information for all bids.

Is there language/translation support service available through DES or elsewhere for state agencies?

Yes: [DES Statewide Contracts: Language Access Contracts](#)

If a vendor, specifically a sole proprietor, is not certified in WEBS, do they still count as a small business? We work with a lot of micro businesses who are self-certifying, but again, do not want to register with OMWBE or WEBS, despite our constant encouragement.

DES has a separate, self-certification form (they are asked to certify their status under penalty of perjury) that we use in our solicitations that allows small vendors to qualify for small business benefits; primarily because, at present, we still need to avoid using preferences based on protected classes that are identified in RCW 39.26.020(22)(b). Here is a link to a bidder certification template that you can download: [Exhibit A-1 – Bidders Certification](#).

When DES posts a draft RFQ how specific is the draft? Is it more like a heads up with general info or is it pretty close to the final draft?

It is pretty close to the final draft. If DES posts a draft RFP, we want to avoid any "bait-and-switch". That said, we also call out that it is a draft, and part of the point of posting the draft RFP is to solicit for feedback – which may change the solicitation.

Will DES add small and diverse firms to Statewide Contracts before the Statewide Contract expires?



Typically not. We rarely add any vendors to a contract after execution. The leading exceptions to this are: 1) if an awarded vendor drops off a contract for whatever reason, or 2) if we have a documented need for expanded capacity (i.e., additional vendors).

Generally, as much as we'd like to, we typically for good reason share what the award structure is like when we release the Competitive solicitation so vendors can gauge the scope of what we are looking for. As a result, there would be risk if we deviated from that structure.

A suggestion was provided last year to allow self-certified small businesses/vendors to be included in the OMWBE system. This way, agency procurement staff can outreach to both OWMBE certified and non-certified small and diverse vendors. Is this still a possibility?

OMWBE would still like to see this happen, but we still have a ways to go. We would like to get to a point where we could get insight into self-certifying and OMWBE-certified to close the gap. Meanwhile, practitioners will still need to go to WEBS to find small businesses, and OMWBE to get a reliable list of certified M/WBEs.

Is the process for registering for certification being streamlined?

The OMWBE Certification process is updated periodically to make things easier. We also have formed partnerships with other certifying organizations to eliminate duplicate steps, such as submitting financial documents repeatedly to multiple organizations.

Are the OMWBE certified firms listed in WEBS?

We encourage registration in WEBS for all certified businesses; however, due to some quirks in the way the data is transferred, the most reliable source for identifying OMWBE-certified businesses is to search [OMWBE's Certified Business Directory](#) (either on the public website or through Access Equity when it is available to your agency).

Is there a cost to register with OMWBE and WEBS?

OMWBE currently collects a certification application fee. There is no cost to register in WEBS.

Has OMWBE considered removing the cost to get certified?

OMWBE is currently evaluating waiving certification fees.