

Frequently Asked Questions About Minority, Woman, and Disabled Veteran-Owned Business (MBE/WBE/DVB) Certification

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1. What are the benefits of certification?

The purpose of the Minority and Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Certification Program is to increase the opportunity for minority and disabled veteran-owned firms to sell their products and services to the State of Wisconsin. A certified minority and disabled veteran-owned business is eligible for a 5 percent bid preference on state purchases. This means that the Minority and Disabled Veteran-Owned Business submits a qualified, responsible, and competitive bid that is no more than 5% higher than the lowest responsible bid. This policy is referred to as a permissive price preference it is not a mandatory policy. The bid preference program does not apply to printing firms, but they are encouraged to become certified so that agencies can procure printing orders from disabled veteran or minority vendors to meet their purchasing goal.

For certified woman-owned businesses, the benefits of certification are: validation by the State of Wisconsin of your ownership, recognition as a valid owner by corporations and municipalities, and more opportunities to get business through supplier diversity programs.

All certified firms can receive technical and marketing assistance, including participation in Marketplace, a statewide business marketing conference. Certified firms are also eligible to be listed in the State of Wisconsin's Directory of Minority, Woman, and Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses which is circulated to corporate buyers throughout the state purchasing agents.

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2. Does it cost anything for certification?

MBE Certification does not cost anything.

WBE and DVB certification costs \$150. Applications shall include a fee of \$50, and an additional payment of \$100 for two, one-year renewal fees. The department shall refund the \$100 payment if certification is ultimately denied.

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3. Who is the check made out to for the WBE and DVB certification fee?

Checks for certification should be made payable to: Department of Administration. The checks should be mailed to Attn: WBE or DVB Certification, Department of Administration, Division of Enterprise Operations, PO Box 7970, Madison, WI 53707-7970.

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4. How long is the certification valid?

The MBE and DVB certification is valid for one year.

The WBE certification is valid for three years, with a yearly renewal the first two-years after certification, and a recertification the third year.

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5. How and when will the department notify a certified business of their renewal/recertification?

For DVB/MBE businesses: To maintain the MBE/DVB status, a business must renew its certification prior to the designated expiration date. The department shall send the business a certification renewal notification to the Contact Person at least 60 days prior to the expiration date of its certification

For WBE businesses: The first two years after being certified as a WBE, each business is required to complete a Renewal Affidavit. This affidavit states that the business is still in compliance with Administrative Code 83. The third year of certification, when the certificate expires, is when a business needs to be recertified. This process requires submittal of additional documents and the recertification fee. If the documents sent in by the business show that it is still in compliance with Adm. 83 , the business will receive a new certificate for another 3-year period.

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6. What is required of a certified business if they receive a department's notification of the intent to deny certification, renewal of a certification, to deny recertification or to decertify?

The certified business shall have 30 calendar days from the date of the department's notification to submit a written request for an informal hearing. If no request is made for an informal hearing, the determination to deny certification, renewal of certification, deny recertification or decertification shall become final and the department will send a final notice of denial to the DVB/MBE/WBE. The business's name will be removed from the database of certified businesses. If the denial is upheld following an informal hearing, the DVB/MBE/WBE may appeal the decision by submitting a written request for a formal hearing to the department within 30 calendar days of the mailing of the notification of denial.

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7. What is meant by "relevant licenses"?

Relevant licenses include any incorporated company or limited liability partnership that needs to be currently registered with the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions. Any sole proprietor or general partnership trading under a trade name or assumed name needs a trade name issued by the Secretary of State's Office. In addition, relevant licenses can also include any locality's business licenses or trade licenses such as architects, CDL licenses, tax registration permits, etc.

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8. Why does the affidavit have to be notarized?

When a form is notarized, you are swearing and affirming that the information you have entered on the form is true, under penalty of perjury. Original signatures and the notary seal on a notarized document have to be mailed to the department. This can also be completed online through the application site with an electronic signature.

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9. What does "supporting documentation" mean?

Supporting documentation means evidence that shows that what you have said in the application is true. The supporting documentation should be submitted with the application to prevent the delay in processing the application. The documents can be uploaded to the secure website where the application is completed. Most delays are caused by incomplete applications or missing documentation.

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10. Why do I have to provide the supporting documents and what is the department's policy regarding the confidentiality of the supporting documents?

The department has to ascertain not only who owns the company, but also who controls and actively manages the company on a daily basis. Except as otherwise required by court order, legal process or other applicable Federal or Wisconsin law, including, without limitation, the Wisconsin Public Open Records Law (Wis. Stats. 19.31-19.39), the Department shall not reveal or disclose any financial or personally identifiable information without the written consent of the applicant.

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11. What is the bank authorization and signature card?

The bank signature card is the application to open the account in the business name. It shows the authorized signatures of the person/people who own and control the bank account. This proves who actually controls the company on a day-to-day basis. If your bank will not give you a copy of that application form with signatures, ask them to write a letter of confirmation on their bank letterhead, stating who the owner and signatory are on the business account.

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12. Do I have to send the original documents?

No. Please do not send us original documents. Send us copies only.

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13. When and why does my certification expire?

The WBE certification expires in three years. The MBE/DVB certification expires after one year. The business may recertify their businesses for another one (MBE/DVB) or three (WBE) years. The reason for the recertification is to ensure that our database of certified firms is always current, with actual firms doing business and with correct contact information.

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14. Does certification guarantee that I will get state or other contracts?

No. It is not a guarantee of contracts. You will still need to do marketing and networking. The certification is established in order to facilitate contracting capabilities for certified businesses with public and private sector entities. Certification doesn't give you anything in and of itself. Like any marketing tool, it's your strategy and plan that gets you the business. As a certified company, you pitch your value with the vendor's awareness that you're a "diversity supplier" as a certified MBE/DVB/WBE. *By registering in VendorNet, at least 5 percent of state purchasing and contracting is targeted to certified minority and disabled veteran-owned businesses. Certified minority and disabled veteran-owned firms are also eligible for a low-bid waiver as long as their bid is no higher than 5 percent of the lowest qualified responsible bidder.* Woman-owned businesses should also register in VendorNet to get notifications of the jobs that are available with the State.

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15. What is the purpose of an on-site visit?

The main purpose is to confirm what was written in the application and the supporting documentation. It gives the department a chance to see the business facilities, understand the daily management process and answer any remaining questions we have about a company's eligibility. The on-site visit is at the discretion of the department.

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16. How long does the certification process take?

Certifications generally take four to six weeks. Any deficiency in receipt of required information and documents may delay the certification process.

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17. What do I need to do to stay in the Program when my certification expires?

The department shall send a recertification notice to the Contact Email of each certified business at least 60 calendar days prior to the certification expiration date.

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18. Does the business need to be in operation at least a year in order to be eligible for certification?

The rule states that a business operating less than one year may create the presumption that an applicant does not or cannot satisfy the eligibility standards for certification as an MBE/DVB/WBE. In such cases, the applicant has the burden of establishing to the department's satisfaction that the business meets the eligibility standards despite being formed within one year prior to an application for certification. Stock transferred from a non-minority, woman or disabled veteran-owned business to a minority, woman, or disabled veteran-owned within preceding year also creates the presumption of ineligibility.

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