SB\ **U.S. Small Business Administration**

Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contracting Program

RESOURCE GUIDE

SPRING 2021

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INTRODUCTION

This Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Federal Contracting Program Help Desk Guide is a one-stop shop for questions related to the certification program and its application process. Please reach out to wosb@sba.gov with questions or comments that are not resolved in this guide.

Frequently Asked Questions: WOSB Federal Contracting Program

What is the WOSB Federal Contracting Program?

To help provide a level playing field for women business owners, the government limits competition for certain federal contracts to Women-Owned Small Businesses (WOSBs) and Economically Disadvantaged Women-Owned Small Businesses (EDWOSBs) that participate in SBA's Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contracting Program (WOSB Federal Contracting Program).

The WOSB Federal Contracting Program permits certified WOSBs and EDWOSBs in eligible industries to compete for contracts that are set aside for them. It also allows contracting officers to make sole-source awards to WOSBs (including EDWOSBs) under specific circumstances. Visit www.sba.gov.wosbready for a comprehensive overview of the program.

What are the benefits of the WOSB Federal Contracting Program?

There are many benefits to certifying as a WOSB as part of the WOSB Federal Contracting Program. Review this fact sheet for the full list.

What are the eligibility requirements to qualify as a WOSB or an EDWOSB for the WOSB Federal Contracting Program?

The eligibility requirements to qualify as a WOSB or an EDWOSB are fully defined in Title 13 Part 127 Subpart B of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Firms can also get a preliminary assessment of whether they qualify at SBA's beta.certify.sba.gov website.

The qualifying NAICS codes for WOSB and EDWOSB set-aside contracts are the same. Not all NAICS codes are authorized for use under the WOSB Federal Contracting Program. To check which NAICS codes are authorized under the WOSB Federal Contracting Program, visit the SBA's qualifying NAICS codes page.

What are the recent changes to the WOSB Federal Contracting Program?

- SBA's new, free online certification process for WOSBs and EDWOSBs is live on SBA's new online portal: beta.certify.sba.gov.
- As of October 15, 2020, the previous self-certification option is no longer available on the older certify.sba.gov platform.
  — All documents previously uploaded in certify.sba.gov for WOSB and EDWOSB self-certifications will be available through March 31, 2021, for retrieval.

- All WOSB firms need to take action in beta.certify.sba.gov in order to compete for WOSB Federal Contracting Program set-aside contracts.
- If the firm is currently self-certified:
  — It will remain certified for the duration of existing contracts.
    - For the purposes of contracts (including multiple award contracts) with durations of more than five years (including options), a self-certified firm must get certified by SBA or an approved Third-Party Certifier (TPC) prior to the end of the fifth year of the contract.
  — There is no grandfathering of firms who were self-certified before October 15.
  — If the firm would like to bid on new contracts, it needs to become certified through the new, free online process at beta.certify.sba.gov.
- SBA allows continued participation from businesses that utilize approved TPCs to obtain WOSB or EDWOSB certification. If the firm is TPC certified:
  — It will remain certified for the duration of existing contracts.
  — If the firm would like to bid on new contracts, it needs to complete an application and upload its unexpired WOSB or EDWOSB TPC-certified documentation through the new, free online process at beta.certify.sba.gov.
  — TPC-certified firms must recertify three years after the date of their most recent recertification as a TPC-certified firm.
- SBA continues to accept a current, valid 8(a) Business Development Certification Program certification to demonstrate WOSB eligibility.
  — Firms must provide their most recent annual review letter to demonstrate eligibility. If in their first year, an acceptance letter will be required. These documents need to be uploaded in beta.certify.sba.gov.
- SBA allows participation in the WOSB Federal Contracting Program from firms certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Center of Verification and Evaluations (CVE), provided they meet all eligibility requirements for the WOSB Federal Contracting Program.
  — Firms must provide their CVE certificate and supporting documentation through beta.certify.sba.gov.
- Refer to this infographic on the steps firms need to take based on their status.

What is the purpose of these new regulations?

To make it easier for qualified small businesses to participate in the WOSB Federal Contracting Program by improving the customer experience.

Also, it makes it easier and more efficient for contracting officers to set aside contracts for, and make awards to, firms certified as WOSBs and EDWOSBs.

Frequently Asked Questions: Beta.certify.sba.gov application

When do firms need to apply take action in beta.certify.sba.gov?

Before firms can compete for WOSB Federal Contracting Program set-aside contracts, they must apply for certification through the new process on beta.certify.sba.gov or go through an approved Third-Party Certifier (TPC). Both methods will require that firms use the beta.certify.sba.gov website. For more information about the new application process, please review the following beta.certify.sba.gov fact sheet.

The new beta.certify.sba.gov website makes it easy for firms to understand the changes to the certification process to ensure they remain eligible.

On the website, firms can:

- Access checklists that provide guidance prior to applying.
- Explore their company's eligibility.
- Find answers to questions regarding their firm's eligibility in the program.
- Request information from SBA program experts.
- Create an account and proceed with their application. (Note: When firms create an account, they will be automatically directed to a new screen to access login.gov. This is a secure platform for creating new account logins.)

How do firms create an account and claim their business in beta.certify.sba.gov?

To apply for WOSB or EDWOSB certification on beta.certify.sba.gov, firms need to first obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and have an active account on SAM.gov.

Firms should make sure to maintain and update their SAM.gov data to ensure their information is accurate as it will be used to determine their eligibility for the program when they claim their business in beta.certify.sba.gov.

The business owner should be the one to create the account and claim the business.

1. To find their business and claim it, they must type in their DUNS number, Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN), and Marketing Partner Identification Number (MPIN) from SAM.gov.
2. Once their business appears, hit "Claim."

Once the account is created and they begin the application, they will be asked if they wish to assign a delegate to work on the application. This ensures individuals other than the business owner are not listed as the highest owner. However, note that the business owner will be the one required to attest and submit the application.

Is there a checklist firms should follow to avoid missing documents on their application?
Missing or incorrect documents will delay or cause an application to be rejected. In order to ensure all necessary documents are uploaded to the portal, carefully review the documentation checklists prior to applying and collect the necessary documents in advance.

Applicants may receive requests for additional information from an SBA representative based upon their application and initial answers. See section 2.23 of the WOSB Applicant User Guide (pages 65–66).

Once firms have successfully completed certification through an approved Third-Party Certifier (TPC), do they need to do anything in beta.certify.sba.gov?
If firms are seeking certification using a certificate from a Third-Party Certifier (TPC), they will still have to complete the application process on beta.certify.sba.gov. They will be prompted to upload the certificate under the "Existing Qualified Certifications" section.

Only WOSB certificates from SBA-approved TPCs will be accepted. There are only four approved organizations that offer WOSB certification:

- El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- National Women Business Owners Corporation
- U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce
- Women's Business Enterprise National Council

As a reminder, previous or current WOSB and EDWOSB **self-certification** is not the same as **third-party certification**. It does not qualify firms for certification in beta.certify.sba.gov. If firms are currently or previously self-certified, they will have to complete a new application in beta.certify.sba.gov that SBA will review and approve.

If a firm has self-certified as a WOSB in the past, is that still an option in the new beta.certify.sba.gov platform?
Under the new certification process, SBA must review each applicant's documentation to verify a firm's eligibility to participate in the WOSB Federal Contracting Program. Self-certification to participate in the WOSB Federal Contracting Program is no longer an option.

If a firm would like to compete for WOSB Federal Contracting Program set-asides, they must submit an application in beta.certify.sba.gov that will then be reviewed by SBA for approval.

If a firm is certified through another SBA business development program (8(a) and CVE), can they apply for the WOSB Federal Contracting Program?
SBA continues to accept a current, valid 8(a) Business Development Certification Program certification for the WOSB Federal Contracting Program, provided they meet eligibility requirements. Firms must provide their most recent annual review letter or their acceptance letter, if in their first year through beta.certify.sba.gov.

SBA allows participation from firms certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Center of Verification and Evaluations (CVE), provided they meet all eligibility requirements.

Firms must provide their CVE certification letter and supporting documentation through beta.certify.sba.gov.

Refer to this infographic on the steps firms need to take based on their status.

After a firm has submitted an application in beta.certify.sba.gov, what is the next step?
SBA began issuing decisions on certification as of October 15, 2020.

If a firm's application is deemed insufficient or incomplete, an SBA representative may reach out to request additional information or documentation.

SBA will make its determination within ninety (90) calendar days after receipt of a *complete package* , whenever practicable.

Once a firm is certified in beta.certify.sba.gov, what do they have to do to maintain their certification?
Certified firms will have to take action annually to attest to meeting the program requirements set forth in 13 CFR 127. On a firm's first and second anniversary of certification, they will have to perform an annual update questionnaire. On a firm's third anniversary of certification, they will have to complete a recertification. The annual update and recertification processes are detailed in this beta.Certify.sba.gov Knowledge Base Article.

Where can firms access berta.certify.sba.gov assistance and informational materials?
The beta.certify.sba.gov Knowledge Base is a valuable resource for firms to get started learning about this new platform with how-to videos, user guides, and more!

WOSB Federal Contracting Program Assistance and Webinars

The WOSB Federal Contracting Program has multiple avenues to receive assistance. The SBA offers a variety of resource partners to assist small businesses. Firms can also use the SBA Local Assistance tool to contact their local SBA regional and district office or Women's Business Center.

In addition, the beta.certify.sba.gov Knowledge Base is a valuable resource for firms to get started learning about this new platform with how-to videos, user guides, and more!

Free Training Webinars
The WOSB Federal Contracting Program also offers webinars and town halls that cover various topics related to WOSB and EDWOSB certification. Participation in webinars and town halls are completely voluntary. Once registered, participants will receive invitations and follow-up correspondence from WOSBTraining@sba.gov. Firms should register for a session that best addresses their current or future status or need:

- [WOSB Certification Eligibility and Application Process Webinar](#): This training is designed for firms that are new to the WOSB Federal Contracting Program or that are pursuing their certification application on beta.certify.sba.gov for the first time.
- [Continuing WOSB Federal Contracting Program Eligibility](#): This training session is offered to firms that are nearing their annual attestation or program recertification in the next 30 to 120 days.
- [WOSB Quarterly Process Session](#): This session is primarily for contracting officers and SBA resource partners to better understand the processing of WOSB certifications and the overall application process.
- [I'm WOSB Certified: What's Next?](#): This session is primarily for firms that are already WOSB or EDWOSB certified and are curious as to what may be potential next steps for their firm.

Additional Resources

There are numerous resources to aid firms in their WOSB Federal Contracting Program journey.

- Numerous marketing materials detailing the WOSB Federal Contracting Program including fact sheets, infographics, FAQs, and more:
  — General WOSB Federal Contracting Program [Fact Sheet](#)
  — Will You Be WOSB Ready? [Fact Sheet](#)
  — Steps to a Successful WOSB Application [Fact Sheet](#)
  — WOSB: Why Certify? [Fact Sheet](#)
  — Are You WOSB Ready? [Infographic](#)
  — [Certification options table](#)
  — WOSB Federal Contracting Program Overview [PowerPoint Presentation](#)
- There are also a number of resources associated with our application portal, [beta.Certify.sba.gov](#), including:
  — WOSB Applicant [User Guide](#)
  — A [Knowledge Base,](#) including relevant articles, training media, FAQs, and more
  — [Documentation checklists](#) detailing required documents for applying
- The SBA offers a variety of resource partners to assist small businesses. Firms can also use the SBA Local Assistance tool to contact their local SBA regional and district office, Women's Business Center, or local Procurement Technical Assistance Center.
- To stay up to date with changes to the WOSB Federal Contracting Program, please visit [sba.gov/wosbready](#).
- For questions on the WOSB Federal Contracting Program, email [wosb@sba.gov](#).
- For WOSB Federal Contracting Program training inquires, email [WOSBtraining@sba.gov](#).
- Technical help requests for beta.certify.sba.gov can be submitted here, via the "help" tab: [https://beta.certify.sba.gov/help/](#)