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Maximizing MWSBE Participation 2021 Information Session

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Overview of Presentation



- I. City's Minority, Women & Small Business Enterprise Program**
- II. Pre-Award Good Faith Efforts**
- III. Counting MWBE Goal Credit**
- IV. MWBE Prime Level Participation**
- V. Business Support Services and Programs**
- VI. Questions**





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City's Minority, Women & Small Business Enterprise Program

Mission



The Office of Business Opportunity is committed to cultivating a competitive and diverse economic environment in the City of Houston by promoting the success of small businesses and developing Houston's workforce, with a special emphasis on historically underutilized businesses and disenfranchised individuals.

Key Objectives: *Educate, Connect & Grow Businesses*



City of Houston's Minority, Women and Small Business Enterprise Program



- Governed by City's Code of Ordinances, Chapter 15, Article V – Minority, Women and Small Business Enterprises (MWSBE).
- Express purpose is to promote the growth and success of MWSBEs.
- City establishes goals on contracts as a way to increase participation of MWSBEs:
 - *Goal-Oriented Contracts (Construction, Goods, & Non-professional Services)*
 - *Regulated Contracts (Professional Services)*
- Contract goals are based on divisibility of the work required under the contract and the availability of certified MWSBEs to perform the work.
- Goals are not quotas. The standard for meeting goals is demonstrating and documenting good faith efforts.



Minority & Women Business Enterprise Goals

Citywide Annual Aspirational Goals

- **Construction Contracts:** related to construction-related projects, and have two individual goals. **MWBE goal = 34%** (23% MBE, 11% WBE)
- **Professional Services Contracts:** require a professional license (e.g. Architect, Engineer, Attorney, Accountant, Consultant, etc.). **MWBE goal = 24%**
- **Purchasing Contracts:** provide the supply of goods and non-professional services. **MWBE goal = 11%**

Contract-Specific/Categorical Goals

- Individual projects have contract-specific goals, inclusive of categorical goals, assigned based on the availability of MWBEs and divisibility of the work.



What is Department Services?



Department Services is a team of OBO employees dedicated to making the City's procurement process as competitive and diverse as possible by assessing Bidders' MWBE Participation Plans for compliance with pre-award good faith efforts with respect to any applicable MWBE goal, after an initial determination by the City contracting department of MWBE Participation Plan non-compliance. Department Services also assist the departments in setting MWBE goals.





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Pre-Award Good Faith Efforts



Achievement of the MWBE Goals



- **Construction Projects**
 - MBE and WBE goals are **separate** goals to be met individually.
 - Any **excess** of the MBE or WBE Goal **cannot** be used to meet a deficient MBE or WBE goal
 - **Only 4% SBE** can be used to meet either the MBE and/or WBE Goal, but both cannot get 4% each.
 - Native-American MBE certified firms cannot be used to meet MBE goals on construction contracts (with the exception of SRF contracts); however, they can be used as SBEs up to 4%.
- **Professional Services/Goods & Non-Professional Services Projects**
 - Combined MWBE goal
 - SBEs cannot be used



Pre-Bid Good Faith Effort Request



At the time of bid submission, when a contractor has not met the advertised goal(s) or failed to utilize listed certified firms for Commercially Useful Functions, documentation of

Good Faith Efforts (GFE) must be submitted. This documentation will be reviewed by OBO to assess MWSBE compliance, per the Good Faith Efforts Policy.



What are Pre-Award Good Faith Efforts?

- If the submitted MWBE participation plan is less than the advertised contract goal(s), the vendor must submit documentation illustrating their good faith efforts.
- Good Faith Efforts is the standard of review applied to determine a vendor's MWBE goal compliance.
- Pre-Award Good Faith Efforts are steps taken to achieve Advertised Goal(s).
- If vendor anticipates it cannot or will not meet the advertised goal at bid submission (or prior to contract award if the plan has been approved), a Good Faith Efforts demonstration is **REQUIRED prior to Council award.**
- Good Faith Efforts Policy can be found on OBO's website at www.houstontx.gov/obo.



Commercially Useful Function



A MWSBE performs a commercially useful function (CUF) when it is responsible for a task germane to the contracts scope of work. The work **MUST** be directly related to the work in the contract. A MWSBE must be certified in the NAICS code in which they are performing.

- A certified firm listed in the directory **does not** eliminate the need to check if they are performing a CUF.
- Prime Contractors only get goal credit for approved certified firms performing commercially useful functions.
- A CUF analysis is performed pre-award and throughout the life of the project



OBO's Assessment



- GFEs are evaluated on a case-by-case basis in making a determination regarding whether a vendor is in compliance with the City's Good Faith Efforts Policy for goal attainment.
- As per Policy, efforts are those that one could reasonably expect a vendor to accomplish if the vendor were actively and aggressively attempting to obtain MWSBE participation to meet the contract goals.
- OBO reviews all documents provided by the vendor with bid submission and relevant information from Contracting Departments in making a GFE determination.
- Vendors will be contacted by OBO only for clarification purposes, when necessary.



Pre-Award Good Faith Efforts Policy



Elements include:

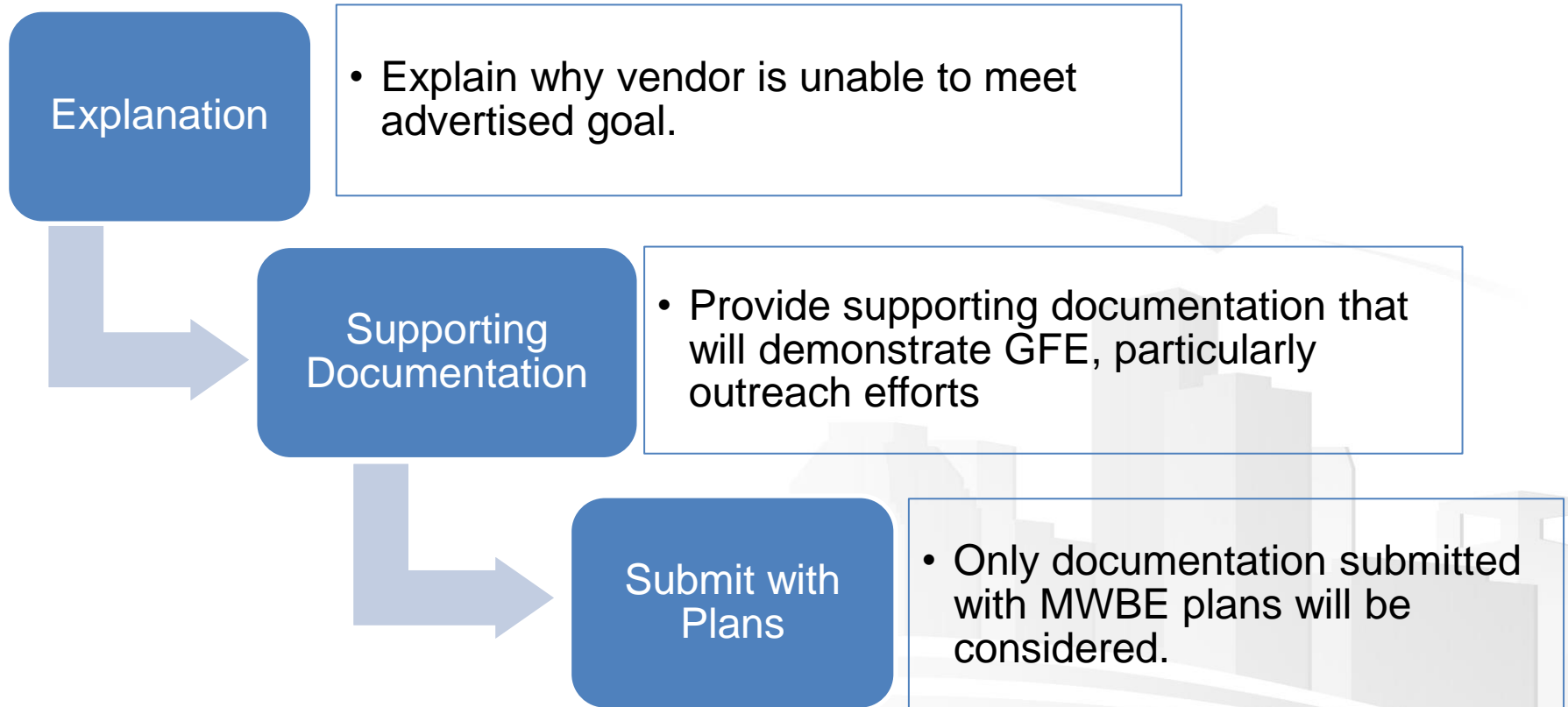
- Attendance at pre-bid meeting
- Outreach and Advertisement
- Access and Point-of-Contact
- Notice and Solicitation
- Contracts and Negotiations

This is **NOT** an exhaustive list.

City may consider other factors or types of relevant efforts in appropriate cases, as documented by contractor.



Requirements for GFE Submission to City





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Counting MWBE Subcontractor Goal Credit

Calculating Participation: Construction Project 1



	MBE	WBE	SBE
Advertised Goals	13%	8%	N/A
Bidder's Submitted Plan	9%	8%	4%
Reasoning	9% MBE + 4% SBE achieves the 13% MBE	Bidder's Plan Achieves the 8% WBE	

APPROVED



Calculating Participation: Construction Project 2



	MBE	WBE	SBE
Advertised Goals	18%	10%	N/A
Bidder's Submitted Plan	17%	2%	13%
GFE Review Needed			
Reasoning	17% MBE + 1% SBE achieves the 18% MBE	2% WBE + 3% SBE fails to achieve the 10% WBE	Only 4% can be used toward the M/WBE goals.



Approved Good Faith Efforts for Construction Project 2



Department Services evaluated documentation submitted by the vendor.

Vendor demonstrated Good Faith Efforts by providing documentation, as follows:

- Identified and designated portions of the work to be performed by MWBEs to increase the likelihood of meeting the contract goals by encouraging bids in various scopes of work.
- Notified a reasonable number of certified MWBEs.
- Followed up to determine if they were interested in submitting a bid.
- Solicited MWBEs within a reasonable amount of time by providing written notification to MWBEs more than 7 business days before bid submission.
- Provided documentation of advertisement.
- Attended the pre-bid meeting.



Calculating Participation Non-Construction Project 1



	MWBE	MBE	WBE	SBE
Advertised Goals	18%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bidder's Submitted Plan	= MBE% + WBE%	5%	3%	10%
Reasoning	Total = 8% MWBE since SBE can only be used for Construction Projects			Cannot be used on non-construction projects.

GFE Review Needed



Approved Good Faith Efforts for PS/Goods/Non-PS



- **Contractor provided the following documentation for evaluation:**
 - ❑ Letter on company letterhead outlining explanation of decreased MWBE participation
 - ❑ Documents/Information provided:
 - Attend Pre-Bid meeting
 - Identified several work elements within the Scope of Work for subcontracting
 - Emails that were sent to certified firms to demonstrate outreach
 - Logged email notification and telephone call follow ups
 - Signed letters of intent for certified firms listed on participation plan
- **OBO reviewed the scope of work, evaluated documentation and verified details provided by the vendor.**
 - 8% MWBE Plan approved because vendor demonstrated good faith efforts.



Calculating Participation Non-Construction Project 2



	MWBE	MBE	WBE	SBE
Advertised Goals	11%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bidder's Submitted Plan	= MBE% + WBE%	9%	4%	0%
Reasoning	Total = 13% MWBE			

GFE Review Needed



Denied PS/Goods/Non-Professional Services Good Faith Efforts



Department Services reviewed the scope of work and evaluated GFE documentation submitted by the bidder / proposer.

- Vendor plan of 13% MWBE participation includes a certified firm not performing a Commercially Useful Function (CUF)
- A MWBE performs a CUF when it is responsible for a discrete task or group of tasks required in the contract using its own forces or by actively supervising on-site the execution of tasks.
- MWBEs must perform work that is required in the contract.
 - e.g., A MBE Printing Service cannot perform on a Towing Contract.
- A MWBE has to be certified in the NAICS code in which they are performing.
 - e.g., A WBE Attorney cannot perform Trucking Services



Why may Good Faith Efforts Requests be Denied?

Denied Good Faith Efforts usually consist of:

- Prime Self Performing
- Minimal Evidence of Outreach
- Lack of Supporting Documentation
- CUF Issues
- Using Firms Not Certified with the City



Tips to Increase MWBE Goal Attainment

- Establish relationships with MWSBEs in advance
- Look for divisible areas within the scope of work
- Use the City of Houston MWSBE Directory to find firms
- Directly solicit to MWSBEs or advertise in a timely manner
- Provide relevant bidding/contract information to MWSBE Firms
- Offer assistance to MWSBEs (e.g. Bonding or Mentorship)
- After minimal email response, follow-up with phone calls

City's Good Faith Efforts Policy

<http://houstontx.gov/obo/docsandforms/goodfaihefforts.pdf>



Appeals Process for GFE Denials



- The Vendor has an opportunity to appeal a denial decision to OBO within **three (3) business** days after notification by OBO of the denial.
- If the decision to deny is upheld by the OBO Director or designee, the Bidder will have an opportunity to appeal to the City's Legal Department.
- The request for an appeal to the OBO Director's decision must be made in writing and sent via email to OBO at director.obo@houstontx.gov. The written appeal request must be received within **three (3) business days** of the date of the OBO's Director's decision letter.
- The Legal Department's written decision represents the City's final determination.





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POLICY UPDATE Counting MWBE Prime Level Credit

MWBE Prime Participation



- Historically, the City's MWBE Program has not permitted MWBE prime contractors to count their self-performance towards meeting MWBE contract goals.
 - MWBE goals were solely met through the use of certified MWSBE firms serving as subcontractors or by the use of certified firms in joint venture partnerships.
- **Policy Change:** The City will now allow MWBE Primes to meet advertised goals by self-performing up to 50% of the total contract goal(s).
 - MWBE primes will now retain more dollars on each contract, potentially allowing them to grow and build capacity.
- **Implementation Timeline:** Language for the application of this new policy will be explicitly included in new City solicitations. Existing contracts or solicitations already advertised will not be affected by this new policy.



MWBE Prime Participation



Please keep in mind the following regarding this policy change:

- MWBE Primes will have to choose which goal type they would like to receive credit for on construction projects (MBE or WBE).
- Once a goal type for participation is selected, the Prime's participation credit will be capped at the proposed percentage or the approved goal, whichever is lower.

This new policy serves to assist MWBE Primes to build their capacity, while not losing focus on ensuring MWBE subcontractor participation on City contracts.





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Case Studies

Application of MWBE Prime Level Credit

Case Study 1: Construction Project



Project Name: Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) Improvements
Advertised Goal: 12% MBE and 7% WBE (19.00% Total)
Bidder: Maximus Electric (Bidder is a certified MBE, WBE, SBE)

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NAICS	Description	% of Total Bid	Service or Supplier	Cert. Type for Goal	Certified Firm Name
423610	Electrical Supplies	9.50	Supplier	MBE	Maximus Electric
541816	Construction Management	2.50	Service	MBE	T & L Consulting
238210	Software Engineering	1.30	Service	SBE	Tech Sync
238140	Masonry	5.70	Service	WBE	Rebar Roots
	Total	19.00			

Case Study 2: Construction Project



Project Name: Work Order Contract for Small Diameter Water Line Repairs
 Advertised Goal: 15% MBE and 8% WBE (23.00% Total)
 Bidder: Black Electric (Bidder is a certified WBE)

NAICS	Description	% of Total Bid	Service or Supplier	Cert. Type for Goal	Certified Firm Name
423610	Electrical Supplies	10.00	Supplier	WBE	Black Electric
238120	Rebar	2.57	Service	MBE	A&M Rebar
541618	Construction Management	4.43	Service	MBE	Water Rehab and Design
238210	Software Engineering	2.30	Service	MBE	Prism Solutions
238140	Masonry	5.70	Service	MBE	Houston Mason Workers
	Total	25.00			

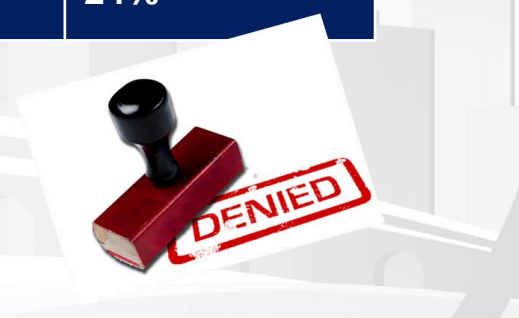
Denied

Case Study 3: Professional Services



Project Name: Communication Network Services
Advertised Goal: 24% MWBE
Bidder: TechSync (Bidder is a certified MBE and WBE)

Name of Certified MWBE	Certification Type MBE WBE	NAICS Code	Description of Work	% of Participation
TechSync	MBE WBE	334210	Data Communication Equipment	20%
Alliant	WBE	4.00	IT Consulting Services	4%
			Total	24%



Case Study 4: Professional Services



Project Name: Legal Services
Advertised Goal: 24% MWBE
Bidder: Palmer & Brown (Bidder is a certified MBE and WBE)

APPROVED

Name of Certified MWBE	Certification Type MBE WBE	NAICS Code	Description of Work	% of Participation
Palmer & Brown	MBE WBE	334210	Law Firm	12%
HOU Notary	WBE	589746	Notary	15%
			Total	27%





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Post-Award Compliance



Post-Award Good Faith Efforts



Good Faith Efforts are steps taken to achieve a Contract Goal which, by their scope, intensity and usefulness, demonstrates ...**the contractor's responsibility to put forth measures to meet or exceed the Contract Goal throughout the duration of the contract.**

- If the Prime fails to achieve the MWBE goal or fails to use all of the approved goal credit subcontractors on their Participation Plan, the Prime must demonstrate that their failure to do so was based on circumstances that they could not reasonably control.
- The City's written *Good Faith Efforts Policy* outlines those factors that will be considered in the assessment of good faith efforts **at the end of the contract.**



Demonstrating Good Faith Efforts Post-Award

Compliance Management

- Designate an MWBE Liaison Officer.
- Execute and submit required subcontracting agreements outlining terms of engagement.
- When possible, provide Sub-Consultants /Subcontractors with advance notice when they will be needed for project.
- Keep a log of efforts made throughout the course of contract to meet goal.
- Contact OBO for assistance if experiencing challenges meeting the goal.

Compliance Management

- Promptly respond to inquiries from the City regarding MWBE participation for goal credit.
- Genuinely attempt to resolve disputes with MWBEs. Leverage City's mediation process.
- Attend all meetings and mediations requested by the City.
- Provide information that is factually accurate and free of material misrepresentation.
- Provide up-to-date MWBE Utilization Schedules and promptly report payments to the B2G Now system.
- Notify OBO of the effect of scope of work changes on Participation Plan.

Deviation Requests

- Utilize all MWBEs on the approved Participation Plan unless a deviation is approved.
- Request a deviation when needed and make Good Faith Efforts to replace MWBE firms with other MWBE firms.

*****City may consider other factors or types of relevant efforts in appropriate cases, as documented by Contractor.***



Assessing Commercially Useful Function



- As discussed in the pre-award section of this presentation, a core element of MWSBE compliance is determining whether a MWSBE listed for credit is performing a Commercially Useful Function (CUF). This analysis is performed post-award, as well as pre-award.

- Prime Contractors only get MWSBE goal credit towards contract goals when:
 - The MWSBE performs work germane to the contract's scope of work using its own forces **AND**
 - The MWBE is certified in the NAICS code in which they are performing



Deviation from MWSBE Plans



- After contract execution, a Prime must comply with Council-approved MWSBE participation plans, unless it has received approval from OBO to deviate from the plan.
- The Prime must seek OBO approval to **add** a MWSBE for goal credit to the approved MWSBE participation plan.
 - The Prime may not receive goal credit for utilizing any additional subcontractors or suppliers without OBO's prior written approval.
- The Prime must also give notice to the affected MWSBE of its request to **remove** or **substantially reduce** (more than 50%) their participation, stating the specific reason(s) for the request.
 - The Prime must demonstrate a good cause to justify the removal or reduction.
- Work designated for certified firms in an approved MWSBE participation plan (specific scope and associated percentage) shall not be completed by any other subcontractor, supplier, or self-performed by the Prime without OBO's written approval.
- **Mediation Services** – offered for disputes between certified firms and Primes.

The City's Post-Award Deviation Policy is available on OBO's Website.

Failure to Make GFE: Common Observations

- Failure to notify MWBEs and OBO promptly of any challenges that will affect MWBE utilization.
- Failure to document changes that affect goal credit MWBEs.
- Failure to respond to City inquiries (letters, emails, calls) regarding MWBE utilization.
- Listing MWBEs for goal credit without notifying them.
- Failure to execute required subcontracting agreements outlining terms of engagement.
- Failure to submit deviation request for a change in MWBE Participation Plan.

- Failure to look for goal credit opportunities on additional work authorized.
- Failure to look for goal credit opportunities when a change order affects the contract
- Failure to fully report payments made to MWBEs.
- Self-performing work intended for MWBEs, without OBO approval.
- Failure to understand how MWBEs will perform on the contract (no Commercially Useful Function or partial goal credit work).

*****City may consider other factors or types of relevant efforts in appropriate cases, as documented by Contractor.***



Evaluation of MWSBE Compliance



- OBO performs a final evaluation of MWSBE compliance at the end of projects
- When a goal is not met, to determine good faith efforts, OBO reviews all relevant documentation related to goal compliance:
 - Prime's Explanation and Documentation
 - Affected Subcontractor's Response and Documentation
 - Department's Explanation/Response and Documentation
 - OBO's Project File
- After evaluating whether Primes made GFE, they are notified of their rating via letter.
- Primes who disagree with their rating have 14 days to contact the OBO Division Manager who will review all evidence and notify the Primes of the results of the review.
- Primes may seek a final review of their rating by appealing to the OBO Director.



MWSBE Ratings



- **Outstanding:** Made Good Faith Efforts to exceed contract goals
- **Satisfactory:** Made Good Faith Efforts to meet contract goals
- **Satisfactory Due to Good Faith Efforts:** Fell short of the goal, but made Good Faith Efforts to meet contract goals
- **Unsatisfactory:** Fell short of the goal, and did not make Good Faith Efforts to meet contract goals



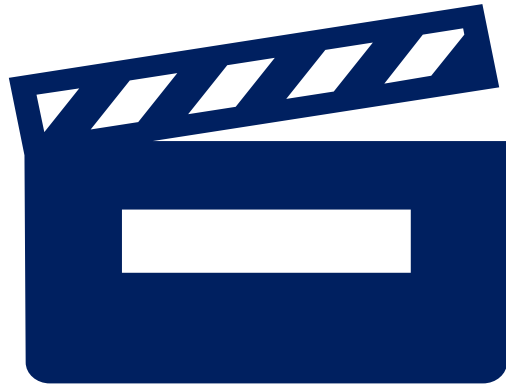


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OBO Solutions Center: Business Development and Capacity Building Services for Certified Firms

OBO Virtual Workshops & On-Demand Videos



- Pre-Certification Workshop (English and Spanish)
- Pay or Play Program
- Good Faith Efforts Compliance Presentations
- Access Granted Webinar Series

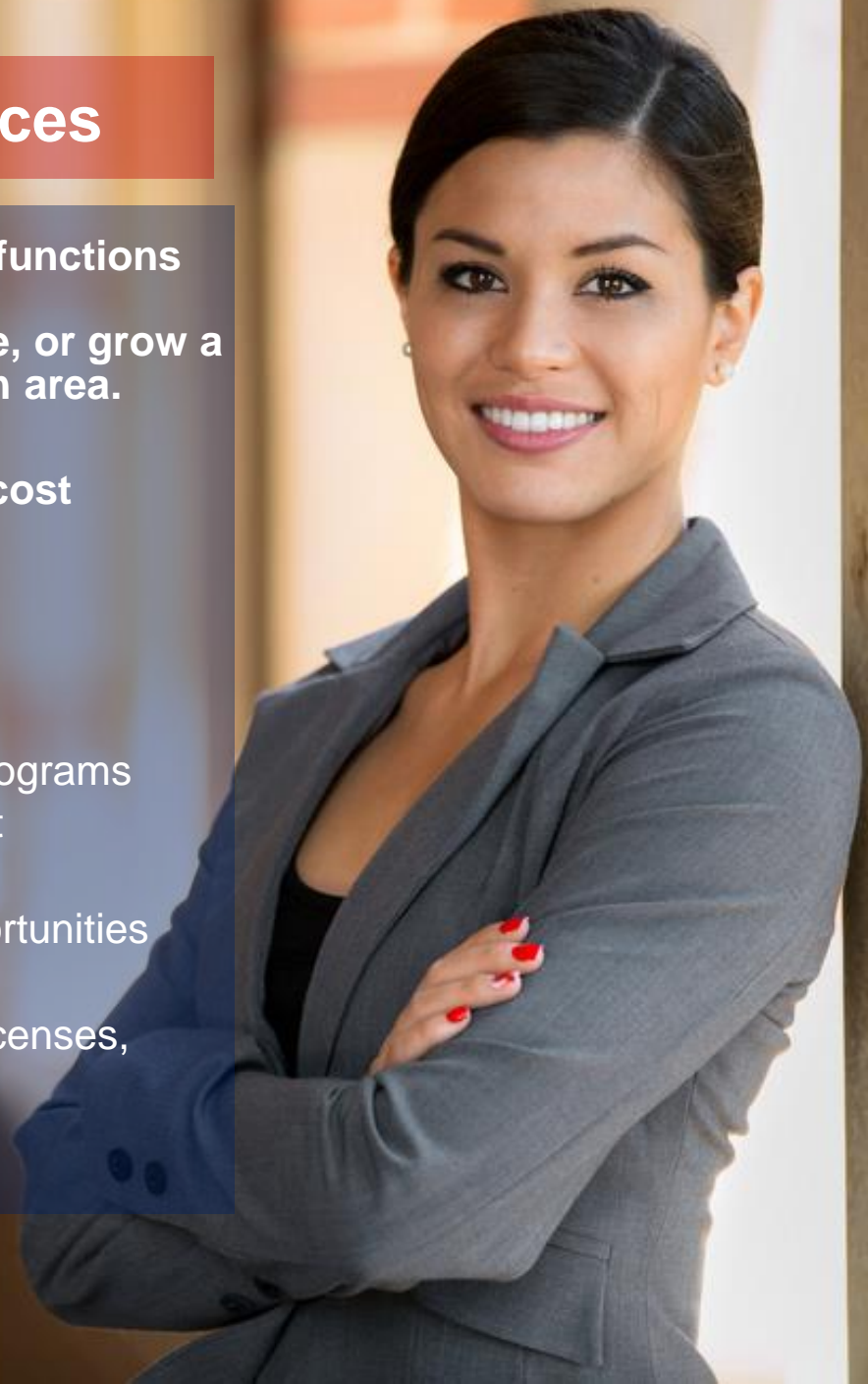


Business Support Services

The OBO Solutions Center (OBOSC) functions as an information clearinghouse for Houstonians wishing to start, operate, or grow a business in the Houston-Metropolitan area.

The OBOSC provides the following **no-cost** services:

- ❖ Access to Financial Resources
- ❖ Business Management Counseling
Courtesy of SCORE
- ❖ Access to OBO Notifications and Programs
- ❖ One-on-One Business Development
- ❖ Networking Opportunities
- ❖ Access to Various Contracting Opportunities
- ❖ International Exporting Resources
- ❖ Information on Relevant Permits, Licenses,
and Fee Schedules
- ❖ Technical Assistance



Houston Small Business Legal Consultations



What issues can HSBLC assist with?

- **Financial Assistance Programs:** What programs are right for me and how do I apply?)
- **Tax**
- **Commercial Leases**
- **Contracts**
- **Employment**
- **Intellectual Property**
- **Other General Business Issues**

In addition to Vinson & Elkins, who with OBO, leads coordination of this program, participating firms include Akin Gump, Arnold & Porter, Blank Rome, DLA Piper, Fish & Richardson, Greenberg Traurig, Hunton Andrews Kurth, Kilpatrick Townsend, Kirkland & Ellis, Latham & Watkins, Mayer Brown, Morgan Lewis, Norton Rose Fulbright, Orrick, Perkins Coie, Sidley Austin, Simpson Thacher, Weil, Gotshal & Manges, and Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP.



Business Development Programs



Turner

BONDING
& BUSINESS CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM



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Connecting with OBO



INSIGHTS TO OPPORTUNITY
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Building Relationships Key to Subcontracting Success

By Angel Rodriguez

In 2017, an unprecedented expansion project began at the Northeast Water Purification Plant (NEWPP) to increase the output of freshwater from 80 million gallons per day (mgd) to 400 mgd. This project, slated to be completed by 2025, has a projected budget of \$1.765 billion, and is considered one of the largest of its kind in the United States. The overarching goals of the NEWPP project are two-fold: the first, to meet the demand for clean drinking water for the growing Harris County population; the second, flood mitigation by reducing the dependency on groundwater usage.

As of October 2020, the NEWPP expansion has utilized the services of more than 95 certified Minority, Women and Small Business Enterprises (MWSBE) subcontractors working on 196 contracts. To date, these MWSBE firms have been awarded approximately \$71,716,012 for their work. With MWSBE participation integral to building city projects, including the NEWPP expansion, the Office of Business Opportunity encourages contractors and vendors to enroll in the

resource for the business community. While we are just a phone call away, our website can also serve as a valuable tool for you. Most of our services can be accessed virtually, including our certification workshops, live webinars, tutorials on contract compliance and the Pay or Play Program, to name a few. In addition, we have a series of business development webinars that are accessible on our OBO Solutions Center page.

Through the City's Small Business Economic Relief Program, we have been able to assist well over 600

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Greetings!

Welcome to the fall edition of Insights to Opportunity!

Several months into the COVID-19 pandemic, small businesses continue to be challenged to make the necessary changes to survive, recover and bolster long-term resilience. Of course, the Office of Business Opportunity remains a

WHAT'S INSIDE

Become Certified in the City of Houston

Learn about the City's certification process and OBO's Certifications & Designations Division.

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Best Practices for Global Trade & Export

To increase sales and profitability, businesses can export products and services to expand their market.

Page 3

Each week, OBO shares information about
virtual events
& pre-bid meetings
procurement opportunities
with our distribution list of
10,000
recipients

On the horizon:

- **Meet the Buyer Procurement Forum: Thursday, 12/02**
 - Register by Nov. 30, 2021
- **I'm Certified, What's Next Workshop: Thursday, 12/09**
 - 2022 Dates: March 3, June 2, Sept. 1, Dec. 1





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If you are currently a Prime or Subcontractor on a City contract, please send all general compliance inquiries to the Contract Compliance mailbox:

obocontractcompliance@houstontx.gov



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Thank You & Questions

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Thank You.



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