



## FAQ

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### **Why is outreach to diverse businesses essential?**

There are several reasons:

- The legislature intends that the state develop procurement policies, procedures, and materials that encourage and facilitate state agencies' and educational institutions' purchase of goods and services from Washington's small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses.
- Purchasing practices should reflect our business population's demographic and be responsive to demographic changes in the business community.
- Removing bias from the purchasing process creates an equitable playing field.
- Businesses gain awareness of opportunities with the state.
- Small and diverse businesses represent economic vitality and are fundamental to the economic development of the state.
- Regular outreach keeps the list of diverse business options robust and current, replacing businesses that are no longer certified and/or registered.
- Outreach allows agencies to meet the legal requirements for non-discrimination.

### **Should I conduct outreach inside of state government?**

Yes. These efforts can include:

- Marketing certification information and business opportunities on agency websites, newsletters, social media channels, etc.
- Sharing other agencies' business opportunities with the public and asking agencies to share their opportunities in return.
- Partnering with other agencies to offer informational workshops, pre-bid conferences, bid matching events, and other activities.
- Sharing lessons learned, successful strategies, agency contacts, and external distribution lists.
- Working with OMWBE and the state Equity Commissions to share business opportunities with their networks.

### **How do I conduct outreach outside of state government?**

These efforts can include:

- Engaging and partnering with diverse communities, local chambers of commerce, regional economic development councils, ethnic organizations, and non-state entities.
- Expanding the advertisement of an RFP or RFQ beyond WEBS to attract a broader array of small and diverse businesses.
- Staffing a booth at events that are attended by small and diverse businesses.



- Sharing business opportunities from partner organizations.
- Inviting small and diverse businesses to meet one-on-one to understand their market position (prime, sub-contractor or sub-supplier) and connecting them to opportunities with state, federal and local governments.
- Marketing upcoming contracting opportunities before they are posted to give the community advance notice.
- Conducting a pre-bid conference before the bid opportunity is posted to share information about the contract and the application process.
- Conducting a pre-bid conference after the bid is posted to answer any additional questions.
- Publishing the bid award and giving other bidders feedback to increase their chances of obtaining future contracts.
- Sharing OMWBE certification information with interested businesses, particularly bidders, so they may get certified before bidding on the contract.

### **How does an organization know when outreach is necessary?**

Outreach is always necessary and is part of a healthy purchasing strategy. Some indicators that additional or improved outreach efforts are needed include:

- The state agency financial reporting system (AFRS) data and the diversity participation report (OMWBE) indicate a disparity in agency spending. Having low or no availability of small and diverse business for the project or purchasing contract.
- Changes in legislative requirements that impact small and diverse businesses.
- When an organization does not do recurring business with small and diverse businesses.
- When business opportunities are available.

### **What components (tools, resources, policies, programs, and procedures) should an organization have in place to conduct effective outreach?**

For guidelines on establishing and maintaining an outreach program, visit [Outreach Program Guidelines](#). Successful outreach programs include:

- Leadership commitment and buy-in.
- Aspirational supplier diversity goals and inclusion plans for meeting them.
- Plan your outreach efforts early so you can budget accordingly.
- Share a point of contact and marketing materials on your agency website so people can contact your agency directly.
- Define process/strategy and corresponding program planning.
- Tools for measuring and analyzing spend data and supplier diversity goals.
- Include outreach as a core element of agency, operations, values, mission.
- Maintain a calendar of events for upcoming opportunities.
- Contacts at OMWBE, DES, WDVA, GOIA, and the Office of Equity.



For a list of partner organizations available to assist public agencies with outreach to small and diverse businesses, visit the [Supplier Diversity Partner Resources](#) page.

### What are the challenges that agencies/educational institutions face?

Challenge	Mitigation to challenge
Not enough budget	Partner with federal, state, or local funded outreach opportunities. Consider virtual opportunities. Agencies need to budget for travel, marketing/attendance fees, and trained staff to attend outreach events and networking functions. Some events are non-profits and charge to attend.
Not enough human capital	Designate a position or add to staff position description form
No direction from leadership	Follow the <a href="#">Governor's Executive Order EO 22-01</a>
No innovation or diversity at the table	Implement tools from the <a href="#">Tools for Equity in Public Spending</a> . These tools were developed by subject matter experts from across the state and approved by the Governor's Subcabinet on Business Diversity.
Lack of lead time	Know your diverse business options: <a href="#">WEBS Vendor Listing</a> & <a href="#">OMWBE Directory of Certified Firms</a>
Organizational culture shift	Hire for cultural humility and values; add diversity performance element in performance evaluations
Diversity initiative has not been implemented into agency business	Analyze your agency's <a href="#">internal processes</a> and identify touch points for using the Tools for Equity in Public Spending, then revise and update applicable policies and procedures.
Time to plan given restraints of agencies to get work done and purchase necessary items and services	Make diversity and procurement planning a part of the procurement and contracting budget approval process.
Lack of tools, best practices, and understanding on how to conduct outreach or slow down procurements.	Diverse business participation work continues after contract signing to assure diversity remains a part of the contract implementation. ( <a href="#">Example Inclusion Plans</a> ) Train contract managers and administrators to monitor diversity performance.  Program managers should review lists of businesses pertinent to their programs to identify diverse business options and begin relationships with them prior to bidding activity.