Chapter 26 Disadvantaged Business Enterprises

26.1 General Discussion

A 10 percent National aspirational goal was established by U.S. DOT for the participation of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) in transportation contracting, as a tool to evaluate equal opportunity in the award and administration of U.S. DOT- assisted contracting and address the effects of past and current discrimination. Requirements of the DBE Program, as prescribed in 49 CFR Part 26 and USDOT's official interpretations (i.e. Questions and Answers), apply to all recipients (and sub-recipients) of highway, transit, and airport funds.

A local agency, when participating in programs funded in whole or in part with federal funds made available by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), must adhere to WSDOT's DBE Program Participation Plan.

While WSDOT's Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) has the overall responsibility for the administration and implementation of WSDOT's DBE Program, local agencies (as subrecipients) also have an important role to ensure that their federally assisted contracts are administered in accordance with 49 CFR Part 26 and the state's approved DBE Program Participation Plan, which is available on WSDOT's website.

WSDOT's OECR, in coordination with Local Programs, will conduct compliance reviews of the local agency's administration of the DBE Plan. Local agencies found to be in noncompliance may be subject to formal enforcement action (suspense or loss of federal funds and/or CA status). A finding of noncompliance will result from the failure to comply with the requirements of WSDOT's DBE Program Participation Plan.

The following assurance statement shall be included in all federally assisted advertisements, agreements, contracts, and all subcontracts:

The contractor, subrecipient, or subcontractor shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex in the performance of this contract. The contractor shall carry out applicable requirements of 49 CFR Part 26 in the award and administration of USDOT-assisted contracts. Failure by the contractor to carry out these requirements is a material breach of this contract which may result in the termination of this contract or such other remedy as the recipient deems appropriate, which may include, but is not limited to: (1) Withholding monthly progress payments; (2) Assessing sanctions; (3) Liquidated damages; or (4) Disqualifying the contractor from future bidding as non-responsible.

26.2 **Procedures**

Local Agency DBE Liaison Officer - The local agency is responsible for ensuring program compliance and monitoring its contractor's and/or consultant's DBE activities. To accomplish this, a DBE liaison officer must be appointed by the Local Agency.

This liaison officer must be an administrator responsible to the chief executive of the agency. This administrator should have the authority to delegate the responsibility to the people who perform the contractor compliance function. The liaison officer's duties are to ensure compliance with WSDOT's DBE Program Participation Plan by the local agency and by their contractors/consultants.

.22 **DBE Firm(s) Certification** – The Washington State Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) is the sole authority in the State of Washington to perform certification of all minority business enterprises, women business enterprises, and socially and economically disadvantaged business enterprises for programs administered by any State, local, or Federal agency. This statutory authorization extends to and binds all USDOT DBE Program recipients in the State of Washington. In order

to count as DBE participation by prospective bidders on federally funded projects, firms must be currently certified by OMWBE. The directory of currently certified DBE firms is available on the OMWBE's website. The directory list can be accessed via OMWBE's website at omwbe.diversitycompliance.com (Diversity Management and Compliance System - DMCS) or by calling 360-664-9750 or toll free (866) 208-1064. Firms not listed in the OMWBE's database will not count towards DBE participation on new contracts.

.23 **Vacant**

.24 **Establishment of Project DBE or FSBE Goals** – The Local Programs Project Development Engineer will review each construction project or consultant agreement to determine if it involves work or scope elements that are conducive to DBE or FSBE participation. To initiate this review, the local agency must submit an engineer's estimate for a construction project or a detailed scope and cost estimate for a

consultant agreement with their suggested goal, to the Region Local Programs Engineer when the contract work or consultant agreement scope is determined. The estimate must show the item quantities or scoping costs of the project.

- Construction funding will NOT be obligated prior to the project review and determination of DBE or FSBE goals.
- PE costs will be obligated, but the Local Agency CANNOT advertise for Consultant Services, prior to a DBE or FSBE goal determination for the agreement.

For alternate construction contracting delivery (such as Design-Build), Local Agencies shall request approval from the Region Local Programs Engineer. If a local agency has, any other projects tied to a federally funded project that utilizes one set of bid documents, the total of both projects is considered a federal aid project for DBE or FSBE goal setting purposes.

The goals for federal aid projects will be set under one of the following categories based on the projected participation level during the year to achieve WSDOT's overall goal:

- DBE Goal
- FSBE Goal

The Local Programs Project Development Engineer will establish a DBE or FSBE goal for the construction contract or consultant agreement. The elements considered by WSDOT in determining state and local agency project contract or consultant goals are available on the WSDOT OECR web page¹.

.25 DBE Provisions in the Plans, Specifications, and Estimates (PS&E) – After the DBE or FSBE goals are determined, the applicable WSDOT General Special Provision (GSP) for the type of goal set as outlined above, shall be included in the PS&E. These GSPs are available on the WSDOT website or from the Region Local Programs Engineer. Only the WSDOT and APWA GSPs are approved for use on a FHWA funded project.

To complete the DBE requirements in the PS&E one of the following applies:

- When a DBE goal is established, DBE Utilization Certification Form, DBE Written
 Confirmation Form, DBE Trucking Credit Form, and DBE Bid Item Breakdown Form,
 MUST be included in the proposal given to each bidder. These forms are available
 from the Region Local Programs Engineer.
- 2. When a FSBE goal is established, the DBE Utilization Certification and the DBE Written Confirmation forms are not required. The DBE Truck Unit Listing Log, and the DBE Bid Item Breakdown are still required.

26.3 Contract Procedures

- **.31 Bid Opening** Each bid proposal must be reviewed to determine if the bid is responsive. For a contract with DBE goals, each proposal shall contain the following documents, per Construction Specifications (1-07.11).
 - DBE Utilization Certification²
 - DBE Written Confirmation³
 - DBE Trucking Credit⁴ (if applicable)
 - DBE Bid Item Breakdown⁵
 - If the prime is proposing to use a DBE broker, they must also submit the broker agreement as part of the bid package.

Failure to accurately complete these forms will be considered as evidence that the proposal is nonresponsive and, therefore, is not eligible for award.

In order to be counted towards the contract's DBE goal, the DBE firm named by the contractor in the bid proposal shall be certified by OMWBE, in the scope of work listed on the DBE Utilization Certification form and in the Bid Item Breakdown. The firm must be and currently shown in the (DMCS) to be eligible for work on a FHWA funded project.

https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/equal-opportunity-contracting/diverse-business-programs

² Form 272-056

³ Form 422-031

⁴ Form 272-058

⁵ Form 272-054

To determine whether a firm is certified as a DBE and eligible to receive DBE credit for work performed on a FHWA funded project, you must verify the firm's certification status in OMWBE's Directory of Certified Firms available at www.omwbe. diversity compliance.com. Document your efforts in the project file. Suspended DBE Firms are not shown in the Certified Directory. Firms that are suspended (and not shown) cannot be used to meet the condition of award goal nor be counted as DBE participation on any new contracts issued subsequent to the date of suspension.

Questions related to the content of the directory can be directed to OMWBE at 360-664-9750 or toll free 866-208-1064.

To meet DBE goals assigned to a project, firms that are not certified or certified firms that are under suspension at the time of bid opening cannot be accepted/counted by the local agency for participation, as a Condition of Award (COA) Contractor/Subcontractor on the project.

Selection of the Successful Bidder

- Selection of Successful Bidder when a DBE goal has been assigned to a Federal-aid project:
 - a. The successful bidder shall be selected on the basis of having submitted the lowest responsive bid and, in order to be responsive, making good faith efforts to meet the DBE goal. The bidder can meet this requirement in either of two ways:
 - Documenting that it has obtained enough DBE participation (commitments) to meet the goal; or,
 - ii. Documenting that it has made adequate Good Faith Efforts (GFE) to meet the established DBE goal. A bidder is required to submit GFE documentation with their proposal only in the event that the bidder's efforts to solicit sufficient DBE participation were unsuccessful.
 - GFE means that the bidder must show that it took all necessary and b. reasonable steps to achieve the DBE goal, and by their scope, intensity, and appropriateness to the objective, the bidder could reasonably be expected to obtain sufficient DBE participation, even if the bidder was not fully successful in meeting the established DBE goal. Efforts done as a matter of form or for the sake of appearance are not considered "good faith efforts" to meet the contract requirements for DBE utilization.

Should the low and otherwise responsive bidder fail to attain the goal and not provide adequate GFE documentation in the bid submittal, its bid will be determined to be nonresponsive, and the next low responsive bid will be reviewed for acceptance.

Agencies that have projects with mandatory DBE goals, shall submit the following items for the three apparent low bidders, to the Region Local Programs Engineer (LPE) to obtain Headquarters Local Programs (HQLP) concurrence to award, **before** the contract is officially awarded to the apparent responsive low bidder:

- The corrected and certified bid tabs
- The DBE Utilization Certification
- The DBE Written Confirmation Documents
- The DBE Trucking Credit form (as appropriate)
- DBE Bid Item Breakdown form
- All broker agreements (as applicable)

Failure to gain HQLP concurrence prior to award on every project with DBE goals or the subsequent award of a contract to a nonresponsive bidder may jeopardize the federal funding of the project.

- c. If the apparent low bidder identifies that they want GFE consideration and submits GFE documentation with the bid, the Local Agency will submit that documentation to the Region LPE for approval action prior to awarding the project. GFE documentation must include copies of each DBE and non-DBE subcontractor quote submitted to the bidder when it selects a non-DBE subcontractor over a DBE for work on the contract.
- 2. Administrative Reconsideration of GFE Documentation A Bidder has the right to request reconsideration if the GFE documentation submitted with their Bid was determined to be inadequate.
 - a. The Bidder must request reconsideration within 48 hours of notification of being nonresponsive or forfeit the right to reconsideration.
 - b. An OECR official who did not take part in the original GFE determination will be assigned to review the reconsideration of the GFE documentation and provide a final decision on the validity of the documentation.
 - c. Only original GFE documentation as submitted at the time of bid or as a supplement to the Bid shall be considered. The Bidder shall not introduce new documentation at the reconsideration hearing.
 - d. The bidder shall have the opportunity to meet in person with the OECR official assigned during the reconsideration hearing for the purpose of setting forth the Bidder's position as to why the GFE documentation demonstrates a sufficient effort. The bidder may provide further explanation or clarification about the information and materials included in the original GFE package during the hearing.
 - e. The OECR official shall provide the Bidder with a written decision on reconsideration within five working days of the hearing explaining the basis for their finding.
 - f. The result of the reconsideration process is final and not administratively appealable to the USDOT.

- 3. **Brokering** If the apparent low bidder selects an DBE Broker (or a service provider for providing a bona fide service) to meet part of the established DBE goal, a DBE Broker Agreement is required to be submitted as part of the Proposal or as a Supplement to the Bid. To be considered responsive, the Broker Agreement shall document the fees or commissions charged. The fee/commission shall not exceed 5% of the cost of the service being provided by the DBE broker.
- 4. **Trucking** When a DBE Trucking firm is used to meet the established DBE goal, the DBE Trucking Credit Form⁶ is required to be submitted as part of the Proposal or as a Supplement to the Bid. The Form shall identify the items to be hauled, the type of trucks to be used, and the number of trucks currently owned by the DBE firm.
- obligation of Award Letter The condition of award letter carries the same contractual obligation as the contract specifications. Examples of a FSBE and a DBE goal award letters are included in the appendices of Chapter 46. The information contained in the body of these examples must be included in the local agency award letter. The award letter shall be on the local agency's letterhead (award letters submitted on consultant letterhead will be returned for correction).
 - Attach a copy of the letter to the contract papers that you send to your contractor for signature. The Region Local Programs Engineer will provide additional information on subletting by DBE contractors.
- .34 Between Award and Execution The contractor shall provide all of the information described in the GSPs including a bidders' list. The list shall include all firms (names and addresses) that submitted a bid or quote (successful and unsuccessful) in an attempt to participate on the project. The local agency shall immediately notify the Region Local Programs Engineer by email with the name and address of the successful contractor for forwarding to the OECR's contract compliance officer.
 - Similarly, the Local Agency shall provide WSDOT with a list of all bidders (successful and unsuccessful) who submitted a bid on the prime contract.
- .35 Monitoring DBE's During Construction The local agency must place special emphasis on the DBE requirements at the preconstruction conference. Changes to the work of a Condition of Award DBE shall be handled in accordance with the GSP. All change orders affecting the work of DBEs shall be submitted to the Region Local Programs Engineer for HQLP concurrence prior to executing the change order.
 - Monitoring the work of DBE/FSBE firms is extremely important, and necessary to determine appropriate credit towards contract goals. You must ensure that the work commitments were actually performed by the firm(s) to which the work was committed. Project diary documentation of the DBEs' activities on the project must be performed in the same manner as is done on the prime contractor and any other subcontractor's activities.

In order to receive credit for DBE or FSBE participation a DBE firm must be performing a Commercially Useful Function (CUF) on that contract. See the GSPs for additional information on CUF.

⁶ Form 272-058

Hence, in addition to the project diary, the local agency must document that each DBE working on the project is performing a Commercially Useful Function (CUF). This is also part of the requirement of the final certification signed by the agency at the end of the project.

Commercially Useful Function On-Site Reviews – The Local Agencies will perform a CUF On-Site Review on every DBE Contractor, Subcontractor, Regular Dealer, Supplier and Manufacturer performing work or supplying materials on the project. The reviews are required anytime a DBE or FSBE contractor works on a project, regardless of whether or not they have Condition of Award commitments. If a CUF has not been performed, participation credit for the firm's work cannot be applied towards the contract goal nor the project's overall goal.

Additionally, the agency shall track work that DBE sub-contractors sublet to lower tier sub-contractors, as credit can only be received if the lower tier sub-contractors are certified as a DBE contractor to perform the specific type of work. If the lower tier sub-contractor(s) is not a DBE or not certified to perform the work, the value of this work cannot be counted toward the contract goal (e.g., be deducted from the DBE amount to be credited to the project).

Conducting DBE/FSBE CUF reviews is a two-step process, whereby the Local Agency completes the first step and the Region OECR compliance specialist completes the second step. Contracts funded with Federal funds shall utilize the following forms, as applicable:

- DBE CUF On-Site Review Form for Construction Contractors/Subcontractors⁷
- DBE CUF On-Site Review Form for Regular Dealer/Manufacturers⁸
- DBE CUF On-Site Review Form/CUF Architect & Engineering/Professional Services
 Firm⁹

Note: All on-site Reviews submitted after June 03, 2019 shall utilize the most current forms.

Once the On-Site Reviews are completed, the OECR Compliance Specialist will upload the CUF forms into DMCS:

As mentioned above, the local agency shall utilize WSDOT's "CUF On-site Review Forms" listed above for purposes of documenting CUF for each DBE contractor/consultant. DBE On-Site forms¹⁰ and instructions.

DBE On-site reviews must be conducted, at least once per construction season,

- At the start of work (for short duration work only), or
- At the peak period of work, and
- Whenever changes in the performance of the work warrants its completion.

The review should be completed per on-site observations, documentation review, and interviews of contractor's personnel. If there is evidence that a DBE firm may not be performing a CUF, immediately contact your Region Local Programs Engineer.

⁷ Form 272-052

⁸ Form 272-064

⁹ Form 272-051

¹⁰ LAG Section 26.5

The Local Agency shall submit the CUF review form to the Region Local Programs Engineer within **14 calendar days** of the completion of the agency's section.

If DBE trucking firms are utilized, in order to receive credit for DBE participation, the local agencies shall follow guidance in the *Construction Manual*¹¹ to ensure compliance with DBE Program requirements.

The APWA GSPs, and the *Construction Manual* shall be followed to ensure compliance with DBE Program requirements.

WSDOT's Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) may also perform an investigation into CUF matters if the outcome of a CUF review reflects questionable activity of the DBE firms performing work on Federal-aid local agency projects.

.36 Prompt Payment (Progress and Return of Retainage) – Local agencies must comply with State and Federal prompt payment laws. In addition, local agencies are expected to monitor and enforce the prompt payment requirements under State Law (as well as 49 CFR Part 26.29), as regards to their contracts with prime contractors. Monitoring and enforcing prompt payment (associated with progress payments and return of retainage) requires the contracting agency to verify (in DMCS) that payments to subcontractors are commensurate with the subcontractors' work scope and are processed/issued within the allowed timeframe. Prompt payment violations on Federal-aid contracts are a breach of contract. When violations are found to exist, local agencies are expected to enforce the terms of the contract by taking appropriate enforcement action.

Monthly Retainage Report – The Prime Contractor must maintain an up to date accounting of any retainage withheld from subcontractors or lower tier subcontractor during the project. The Monthly Retainage Reports shall be submitted to the Local Agency within 20 calendar days after the Prime Contractor receives their monthly progress payment. The Prime shall submit the current retainage withheld on the Monthly Retainage Report Form. The submittal of the Monthly Retainage Report is required for every month between award and final acceptance by Local Agency or until the release of all retainages for every Subcontractor and lower tier Subcontractor.

Note: State law requires payment to subcontractors within **ten days** of receipt of monthly payment from agency to the prime contractor. The DBE regulations require prime contractors to return retainage to subcontractors upon satisfactory completion of the subcontractors' work. A subcontractor's work is deemed satisfactorily completed when the contract owner has made payment to the prime contractor that covers the work having been performed by the subcontractor. Refer to the most current version of the Standard Specifications Section 1-08, Prosecution and Progress along with RCW 39.04.250, RCW 39.76.011, RCW 39.76.020, and RCW 39.76.040 for more detailed "Prompt Payment" requirements.

.37 During Construction – The prime contractor shall enter all payment information into the WSDOT DMCS (wsdot.diversitycompliance.com) each month for all federal aid projects and select state-funded projects. The prime contractor shall enter the amounts received from the agency and the amounts paid to all firms involved with the contract (Zero payments shall be marked accordingly). All firms shall confirm the payment amounts received from the prime contractor each month.

Monitoring DMCS Payments - The local agency shall confirm the accuracy of the date that the prime contractor received payment from the local agency. In addition, the local agency shall verify that the prime contractor is entering payments at least once a month for all subcontractors having performed work on the project. The local agency should expect to see the prime's payment and the payments to the subcontractors within 15 days of the agency's payment to the prime contractor. When deviations or discrepancies are identified in the payment reporting, the local agency shall notify the prime contractor immediately. All payment information shall be entered monthly and include the actual date of the payment. As mentioned above, violations of this contract requirement are considered a breach of contract and must be enforced by the local agency accordingly.

.38 Upon Completion – The prime contractor will record in the system, when the final payment is made to each Subcontractor or Consultant firm and when the final payment for the project is received from the agency. Similar to progress payments, Subcontractor and Consultant firms must confirm the receipt of the final payment. The agency shall make notification of final project payment to the Local Programs Project Development Engineer at the completion of the project.

In addition, for each contract, local agencies must document (in the form of a Written Certification Form) that it has reviewed the contracting records and monitored the work site and determined that work committed to the DBEs at contract award (and subsequently) was actually performed by said DBEs.

Note: Federal-aid contracts cannot be closed until all Federal contract requirements are satisfied. This includes DBE prompt payment requirements (pertaining to progress payments and return of retainage).

.39 Records and Reports – The local agency will maintain such records and provide such reports as necessary to ensure full compliance with WSDOT's DBE Program Plan.

Upon request from the OMWBE, WSDOT, or the USDOT operating administrations (e.g., FHWA), the local agency shall submit the records deemed necessary for inspection, auditing, and review purposes.

26.4 Consultant Agreement Procedures

The consultant agreement procedures for DBE administration differ somewhat from the construction contract approval process outlined above, as the agreement is negotiated after selection of the most qualified firm to perform the scope of work.

.41 Selection of the most qualified Firm - After selection and negotiations with the most qualified firm and before contract execution, the Local Agency must submit the DBE Participation Plan and Good Faith Effort (GFE) documentation, if applicable, that was submitted by the successful firm to the Region Local Programs Engineer for concurrence. During this review, Local Programs will review the plan and GFE documentation to see if proposed DBE firms are certified to perform the scope of work and any GFE documentation that was submitted as part of the DBE Participation Plan before concurrence to execute the agreement is given to the Local Agency.

.42 Monitoring the DBE's during the life of the Agreement – The Local Agency must place a special emphasis on the approved DBE Participation Plan during the life of the agreement. The consultant shall report monthly (to the local agency) on its progress towards achieving the commitments outlined in the DBE Participation Plan. The agency must inquire and monitor the plan to make sure the consultant is on track to meet the planned goal and if any changes are needed to the plan to ensure that the approved goal is met. If changes are needed to the original DBE Participation plan, the local agency must submit them to the Region Local Programs office for concurrence prior to documenting that approval with an executed supplement to the consultant agreement.

In order to receive credit for DBE participation (count towards the contract DBE goal) a DBE firm must be performing a Commercially Useful Function (CUF) on that contract. The CUF process is outlined in Section 26.35 of this chapter. Local agencies must document that each DBE working on the project is performing a Commercially Useful Function (CUF). The form "DBE On-Site Review" shall be used by the local agency for purposes of documenting CUF for each DBE consultant. DBE On-site reviews must be conducted:

- At the start of work (for short duration work only), or
- At the peak period of work, and
- Whenever changes in the performance of the work warrants its completion.

If there is evidence that a DBE firm may not be performing a CUF, immediately contact your Region OECR compliance specialist.

This completed form becomes a part of the local agency's project records. The Local Agency shall submit the CUF review form to the Region Local Programs Engineer within **15 calendar days** of the completion of the agency's section.

The WSDOT Local Agency Consultant Agreements and Consultant's DBE Participation Plan shall be followed to ensure compliance with the DBE Program requirements.

WSDOT's Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) may also perform an investigation into CUF matters if the outcome of a CUF review reflects questionable activity of the DBE firms performing work on Federal-aid local agency projects (as OECR determines necessary/appropriate).

Frompt Payment (Progress Payment) – Local agencies must comply with State and Federal prompt payment laws. In addition, local agencies are expected to monitor and enforce the prompt payment requirements under State Law (as well as 49 CFR Part 26.29), as regards to their agreements with prime consultants. Monitoring and enforcing prompt payment requires the contracting agency to verify (in DMCS) that payments to subconsultants are commensurate with the subconsultants' work scope and are processed within the allowed timeframe. Prompt payment violations on Federal- aid agreements are breach of agreement. When violations are identified the local agencies must enforce the terms of the agreement by taking appropriate enforcement action.

State law requires payment to subconsultant(s) within ten days of receipt by the prime consultant. Refer to RCW 39.04.250, RCW 39.76.011, RCW 39.76.020, and RCW 39.76.040 for more detailed "Prompt Payment" requirements.

- .44 During Contracting Period The prime consultant shall enter all payment information into the WSDOT DMCS (wsdot.diversitycompliance.com) each month for all federal aid projects and select state funded projects. The prime consultant shall enter the amounts received from the agency and the amounts paid to all firms involved with the contract (Zero payments shall be marked accordingly). All firms shall confirm the payment amounts received from the prime consultant each month and the local agency shall verify these entries in the WSDOT Diversity Compliance System. All payment information shall be entered monthly and include the actual date of the payment.
- .45 Upon Completion The prime consultant will record in the system when the final payments are made to each firm and when the final payment for the project is received from the agency. Subcontractor and firms must confirm the receipt of the final payment. The agency shall make notification of final project payment to the Local Programs Project Development Engineer at the completion of the project.
 - In addition, for each agreement, local agencies must document (in the form of a Written Certification) that they have reviewed the agreement records, monitored the work site and determined that work committed to the DBEs at agreement execution (and subsequently) was actually performed by said DBEs.
- .46 Records and Reports The local agency will maintain such records and provide such reports as necessary to ensure full compliance with WSDOT's DBE Participation Plan.
 - Upon request from the OMWBE, WSDOT, or the USDOT operating administrations (e.g., FHWA), the local agency shall submit the records deemed necessary for inspection, auditing, and review purposes.

26.5 Forms - www.wsdot.wa.gov/forms/pdfForms.html

Bid Forms 272-054 Bid Item Breakdown 272-056 Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Utilization Certification 272-058 DBE Trucking Credit Form 422-031 DBE Written Confirmation Document Construction Forms 272-051 DBE CUF On-Site Review for Architect & Engineers/Professional Service Firms

_,	Firms
272-052	DBE CUF On-Site Review for Construction Subcontractors
272-055	Final DBE Utilization Plan Report
350-077	DBE Truck Unit Listing Log
272-064	DBE CUF On-Site Review for Regular Dealers/Manufacturers