Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program

2021 Disparity Study

RFQ Response

Packet A

Submitted February 1, 2022
Scoring Criteria 1: Qualifications/Expertise Team

Part A: Contractor

Provide a listing of all firms on your proposed team

In consideration of this project, we propose creating an advisory committee consisting of multiple subject matter experts to advise, review and guide the process presented here. Subject matter experts would include nationally recognized DBE experts and legal experts. Many of those identified for this role are also submitting proposals to WSDOT and therefore did not wish their names to appear in our proposal but would be interested in participating this way if we were selected. The Center for Economic and Business Research (CEBR) at Western Washington University would conduct the work described within this proposal other than the functions of the advisory committee.

We recently conducted a study for the Legislature using this approach with great success and would work with WSDOT in further enhancing the membership of this group if selected.

List the type(s) of expertise that each firm on your team can provide

We bring the following types of expertise to this project:

- Extensive expertise in research design
- Comprehensive primary research services including surveys, focus groups and meeting facilitation
- Advanced data analytics for secondary and primary data
- In-house creative design, web-services, mailing and other similar services
- Significant experience with Washington economic, business data and demographic data
- A rich history of collaborative and iterative work with Washington State government agencies, including WSDOT.
- A deep institutional commitment to accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusion

In creating an advisory group, we seek to add:

- A chorus of voices with varying opinions and thoughts in relationship to the topics researched
- A balanced approach that is both reasonable and aspirational

How long has each firm on your team provided these type(s) of expertise?

The Center for Economic and Business Research was formed at Western Washington University more than 30 years ago and has been focused on delivering the types of services detailed here for the past 10 years.
Provide an organization chart of your proposed team and include the respective roles that each firm will provide for the team

The Center for Economic and Business Research will be responsible for all deliverables.

Part B: Location and Employment
The Center for Economic and Business Research is located within Western Washington University. Western Washington University employs over 2,100 people and is located at:

516 High St
Bellingham, WA 98225

Part C: History with Sub-Consultants
We do not anticipate having had direct previous work with the members of the advisory group. It is possible that some may have had past interactions with Western Washington University and likely that WSDOT is familiar with them either by reputation or previous work.

Part D: Staff Availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Monthly Availability (Hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James McCafferty</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hart Hodges</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany King</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Analysts</td>
<td>400+</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Part E: Similar Work Experience

Project 1: WSDOT Equity Study - $78,500

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) tasked the Center for Economic and Business Research (CEBR) with broadly exploring the overall equity of the agency’s operations. The four key areas for consideration in this equity study were: land acquisitions, investments in highway construction, employee recruitment and compensation, and general industry trends in benefits distribution.

The goal of this study was to serve as a starting point for future research and exploration of equity within WSDOT, rather than to provide concrete answers or next steps. First, our team conducted a literature review on equity in a variety of topics. Next, we collected data from both WSDOT and other sources. For this project, data was collected on a variety of topics including land values, employee compensation, and area demographics.

The data were analyzed to evaluate if there were any equity concerns in WSDOT’s operations. In addition to quantitative analysis, we also provided WSDOT with several recommendations based on the literature surrounding equity in hiring, compensation, and worker retention.

Our team values equity and diverse perspectives, so we were able to combine our values with quantitative analysis in the project to provide WSDOT with an unbiased evaluation of their practices.

Project 2: WSDOT Surety Bond Study - $48,000

Our Center worked on a project for a state department to understand more about the surety bonding market and surety bond availability to underrepresented businesses. In addition, we were asked to offer policy solutions and programs to address issues surrounding surety bond access. The study consisted of six research steps.

First, our team conducted a thorough literature review on the topic of surety bonds. Through this process, we were able to determine what questions had yet to be answered or needed to be further explored within the client’s state.

From there, we turned to conducting research into the surety bonding market itself. This included the types of bonds that are available, the process to obtain a bond, the costs associated with surety bonds, the companies offering surety bonds, and the programs in place to assist underrepresented businesses in securing a bond.

With this foundational research and understanding of the market, we designed a survey instrument along with the client. The survey was fielded to all underrepresented contractors within the state who work in certain sectors. Responses were gathered through emails to contractors, mailers, and social media advertisements. Survey respondents were asked questions about their experience with the bonding process and the barriers they faced.
While we gathered this quantitative data, we also looked into quantitative data on the subject. This involved exploring data on underrepresented businesses in the state, the number and size of contracts awarded to underrepresented contractors, and disparities in credit scores.

For this project, our team added a lawyer to our team. He offered insights into the legal possibilities of a variety of bonding assistance programs and policies.

Using the research obtained through all stages of the project, we were able to articulate the barriers faced by underrepresented contractors looking to obtain surety bonds. Our team also provided the client with a variety of policies and programs which could be used to address these barriers.

**Project 3: Washington Legislature Outdoor Education Study - $91,000**

At the direction of the Washington Legislature and in partnership with OSPI and the Governor’s office we undertook a supply and demand study of the Outdoor Education programs in the state with the ultimate goal of recognizing the challenge of funding all 5th or 6th grade students to attend a residential outdoor education program.

In this project we collected information from the existing programs in the state to understand the current conditions and limitations. We then collected information from school districts in every county of the state to be able to create a forecast of potential demand including seasonality and program contents.

Similar to the project proposed here, this project required a significant existing landscape study to fully understand the scale requirements.
Scoring Criteria 2: Qualifications of Proposed Project Manager

Part A: Project Manager Background
James McCafferty will serve as the project manager for this proposed project. He oversees a majority of projects conducted by the Center. Three examples of projects he has managed are:

1. WSDOT Equity Study, March 2021 – July 2021
2. WSDOT Surety Bond Study, July 2020 – November 2020

In each of these projects James was responsible for managing communications including updating the client, project staffing, directing research design, project contract, budget and resource management.

Part B: Management Proposal

Washington State Department of Licensing, Cost Recovery Study

In this study we created multiple financial models for the agency showing the costs of providing vehicle licensing fee processing in different forms. The project arrived with a short timeline for completion. The project manager created a project team of a suitable size, resources and skills to meet the timeline requirement. Weekly update conversations were scheduled for project management and ad hoc meetings were held as needed.

While the scope of work did not change the nature of the project required collaborative and iterative conversations with both agency and legislative staff to address any potential questions that could arise in the presentation of the findings. This open communication flow worked between senior project staff, the project manager and the client.

Department of Children, Youth and Families, Market Rate Study

In this study we attempted contact with every childcare provider in Washington State to collect a range of rate and business information to assist the agency to complete a Federal requirement. The study suffered from multiple challenges from a project management perspective. Delays in receiving a completed contract and the onset of a pandemic began a perfect storm that created management challenges. Coupled with this was a unexpected determination by WSIRB that they would not accept WWU’s IRB determination and a second review process was required – ultimately aligning with the determination by WWU’s human subjects team.

We worked closely with the Agency providing at some points weekly updates. The overall project was extended by several months to accommodate the external challenges while maintaining the overall deadlines necessary by the Agency. As a project manager, James, maintained communications and transparency with suggested adjustments to methodology that would not diminish the quality of the research.
Staffing and internal budget allotments required adjusting throughout the project.

**Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rate Setting Methodology**

This is an on-going consulting relationship that consists of two components. The first is weekly meetings that are scheduled for ad hoc topics related to the myriad of rates the Agency sets to provide them external immediate analysis and counsel. The second component to this relationship are sub projects that are created by these discussions that require more than minimal research or analysis time.

In managing this relationship, the project manager hosts the weekly meetings along with other key staff as appropriate. The manager responds to the immediate needs and delegates small research or analysis as appropriate. The key to this sequence is near immediacy in response.

The manager identifies projects that will require extended engagement and creates a scope of work, timeline and budget. Once accepted by the Agency staff and resources are assigned. These sub-projects require separate project management and communications along with the iterations that occur from the collaboration with Agency staff.

Scope creep and budgeting is managed by evaluating the agreed scope of substantive changes and discussing the impacts of those changes before engaging in the work.
Scoring Criteria 3: Key Team Members Qualifications

James McCafferty

Education

Master of Business Administration, Western Washington University (2006)
Bachelor of Science, Journalism/Public Relations, University of Oregon (1993)

Writing and teaching experience

James taught community business education courses for more than 5 years and regularly writes for Center and University publications.

Demonstrated capacity for effective collaboration within diverse communities

Collaboration begins with the belief that we all come to the table as equals and that every effort should be made to make sure that the table reflects the community that you are researching. This is the basis of belief that informs research methodology.

Understanding of geographical, economic, and social impact of discrimination in construction industry and public contracting

Discrimination occurs both in the moment and from longstanding structural elements. These can manifest in different forms but are readily available within the data. Within Washington State we have a wide number of indicators that inform the effects of these types of discrimination.

Understanding of psychological and educational impact of discrimination in employment and public contracting

One of the questions we hope to address in our proposed research is within this realm. If a contractor that could engage in public work says that they are not interested there is something in understanding why. While it could be a tactical business decision it is also possible that is reflects some type of structural discrimination.

Effective communication with a wide range of individuals

James regularly engages in public presentations with audiences of all sizes, works with a wide range of clients and potential clients, and is often the point of contact for the Center. James is also engaged by the University to present on its behalf.

Econometric Experience and Credentials

James is the publisher of the Puget Sound Economic Forecaster and reviews a wide range of econometric analyses.

Project Management Experience
James manages a majority of the Center’s projects and has more than 30 years of project management experience.

**Social Science Study implementation track record**

James has designed nearly all of the Center’s consumer research studies and has been engaged in a majority of the Center’s economic study designs. No project has failed to deliver on its intended research path.

**Cost-Controls, Accountability, and Efficiency track record**

James is the overall financial manager for the Center with appropriate training from Western to this end. The Center has encouraged iterative project design with clients which is slightly different than with a traditional RFP process but in practice, projects must be managed from all perspectives.

Hart Hodges, PhD.

**Education**

PhD, Economics, University of Washington, Seattle (1994)

Masters in Environmental Management, Duke University (1987)

Bachelor of Arts, American Studies/Environmental Studies, Williams College (1985)

**Writing and teaching experience**

Hart has taught at Western Washington University for over 20 years. He has taught a variety of courses in economics, many of which emphasize writing proficiency. Hart has also written extensively for the Puget Sound Economic Forecaster and for peer-reviewed publications throughout his career.

**Demonstrated capacity for effective collaboration within diverse communities**

As a professor, Hart works with students from diverse backgrounds and enjoys hearing unique perspectives. He also collaborates with student researchers at the Center and serves clients from a variety of different communities. Hart has demonstrated effective collaboration with diverse communities through his work with a number of women’s organizations as well as minority business development organizations.

**Understanding of geographical, economic, and social impact of discrimination in construction industry and public contracting**

Hart’s background as a board member for the Northwest Workforce Council has exposed him to a variety of stakeholders in the construction industry. Through this experience, he has developed a strong understanding of this industry and what impacts discrimination may have in wage and hiring practices. Through his research, Hart is also knowledgeable about the geographic, economic, and social impacts of discrimination in general.
**Understanding of psychological and educational impact of discrimination in employment and public contracting**

Western Washington University values education on discrimination, equity, and inclusion. Hart has attended several workshops on the impacts of discrimination in employment and public contracting.

**Effective communication with a wide range of individuals**

Through his teaching, Hart has demonstrated his ability to effectively communicate with students of various backgrounds. He also regularly presents research to a wide range of groups from academic colleagues to the general public.

**Econometric Experience and Credentials**

Hart regularly uses econometrics in his academic research and has published work using econometric methods in peer-reviewed journals. He also has taught econometrics classes at Western for 20 years.

**Project Management Experience**

Hart has co-directed the Center for 20 years, managing many projects over the years. He also received formal training as a project manager at the North Carolina Alternative Energy Corporation.

**Social Science Study implementation track record**

Hart’s research in economics at the Center demonstrates a strong track record in the social sciences. Even in his academic work, Hart focuses on applied work, valuing the implementation of social sciences, not just the theory.

**Cost-Controls, Accountability, and Efficiency track record**

Hart managed the Center’s budget and finances for 20 years. The Center has always been self-sustaining, proving Hart’s ability to manage efficiently while maintaining a high quality of work.

**Bethany King**

**Education**

Master of Science, Economics, University of Wyoming (2021)

Bachelor of Science, Economics/Environmental Systems Science, University of Wyoming (2019)

**Writing and teaching experience**

Bethany regularly writes reports for the center in addition to writing for other academic and general audience publications.
Demonstrated capacity for effective collaboration within diverse communities

Bethany works directly with students who come from a variety of backgrounds as well as with clients who are just as diverse. She frequently collaborates with people from many different communities and is comfortable doing so.

Understanding of geographical, economic, and social impact of discrimination in construction industry and public contracting

Discrimination is not always obvious. It can require extensive analysis to fully capture the effects of discrimination in any industry. Research in economics has shown the long-term and pervasive effects of discrimination and is an important area for further research. Bethany keeps up-to-date on literature on discrimination and is knowledgeable about the issue.

Understanding of psychological and educational impact of discrimination in employment and public contracting

Discrimination has a long, well-documented history of impacting education outcomes. Through this project, we hope to better understand how potential discrimination in public contracting may have impacts on education and on individuals’ psychology. These impacts can have broad impacts on society and are important to address.

Effective communication with a wide range of individuals

Bethany regularly presents findings and otherwise communicates with individuals from a variety of backgrounds. Research is useless unless it can be communicated effectively. All communication should be adaptable to fit a wide variety of audiences.

Econometric Experience and Credentials

Bethany has completed a significant amount of coursework in econometrics throughout her education. She also demonstrates her economic skills in her work at the center performing much of the advanced analytics, econometrics, and forecasting.

Project Management Experience

Bethany is the first point of contact with student researchers. She manages many of the Center’s projects, keeping them on time and meeting a high standard of quality.

Social Science Study implementation track record

Bethany keeps up-to-date on research methods and helps design appropriate studies and plans for clients’ needs.

Cost-Controls, Accountability, and Efficiency track record

Bethany manages many of the Center’s projects, keeping them progressing efficiently and maintaining accountability.
Scoring Criteria 4: Firm’s Project Management System

Describe your firm’s Quality Assurance/Quality Control process

The Center uses a multi-layered approach to ensuring quality. It begins with a project kick off meeting with the project and client key players attending and discussing not only the steps in the process (scope of work) but also how the information will be used and who they are. This step helps align the client’s desires with the research team’s perspective of what they are attempting to inform.

We prefer then to have the research team look to past research using some form of literature review. For some projects this is a formal process with a written report but for many it is informal with the outcome being a rich discussion about what is known and what processes have been used before.

As the project team engages in the work the project lead communicates regularly, minimum weekly but often 2-3 times per week, with the project manager. Any issues or concerns are addressed immediately. For issues needing client feedback those are communicated quickly.

Projects are reviewed weekly with project staff presenting their work to date every two-weeks within the wider research team.

Preliminary drafts are shared with clients as appropriate for each project. All reports are reviewed at multiple levels within the Center and University as appropriate.

The Center also has the ability to have research reviewed through a peer review process if desired where nationally recognized academics will evaluate our work and provide feedback.

Describe your firm’s tracking system(s) to monitor the project’s budget and/or scope

Our Center does not necessarily operate based on a project’s budget. The Center for Economic and Business Research prefers to undertake projects based on an all-inclusive fee rather than billing by the hour or through a series of amended contracts. In classes we teach about the dangers of agency that occurs between consultants and clients and in an effort to practice what we preach we suggest this model here.

That being said, research staff are allocated a target number of hours per scope item and do report variances or expected variances as a project emerges. External or other fixed costs are budgeted and any significant variance noted.
List your firm’s scheduling program. Identify the type of software and list up to three projects where the proposed Project Manager(s) have utilized this software

The Center does not use scheduling software and has instead developed a visual project management system along with a check-in process that has shown to increase the velocity of our work while also enhancing quality. Our system was developed in line with multiple management theories that focus on work environment and maximizing efficiency.

Describe your firm’s process for interacting with your internal project team

Project teams typically meet regularly to coordinate and delegate responsibilities. The project team also regularly meets with the management team for any needed guidance on the project and for the management to ensure quality of work.

Describe your firm’s ability to provide interaction with your client and/or stakeholders

The Center enjoys working with clients and prefers to have the client actively involved in the project. However, not all clients have the time to be involved in the process. We discuss with the client what level of involvement they would like to have and accommodate the client’s needs. From the beginning we seek to understand exactly what the client will do with the information we provide; this helps us to tailor our product to meet the client’s individual needs. From there, we regularly check in with the client to answer any questions and to update them on the progression of the project.
Scoring Criteria 5: Project Delivery Approach

Part A: Work Plan

How does your firm develop a work plan for this project?

Developing a work plan for this project is envisioned as a collaborative effort between our Center and WSDOT and its stakeholders. The plan would be grounded in the desired outcomes of the project creating a pathway of intentional actions meant to inform the final result.

Weaved into that precision approach are the opportunities to add value add additions to the research that provide meaningful insights to WSDOT from the interactions. Additional survey questions or research that add little cost to the project but deliver significant value are critical in WSDOT receiving full value for the research proposed.

This process creates both an overall research methodology but also defines/refines the key research questions to be considered. These, in turn, create a comprehensive scope of work.

The proposed research questions require census-style data to be collected from a meaningful number of businesses within the industry.

Who is involved in the decision-making process for the development of the work plan?

We would be primarily responsible for development of the work plan but will collaborate with WSDOT and its stakeholders to accommodate desired defined outcomes and research questions.

Describe each of the elements of the proposed work plan for this project

The following would be a proposed work plan for this project, but it would likely be refined with the collaborative work described above.

Development Stage

1. Kick-off meetings
   a. Collaborative work to define project outcomes, research questions and methodologies
2. Form advisory committee
   a. Monthly advisory committee updates will occur throughout the project but will occur at a higher rate in the early and late stages of the project as materials are developed and opinions are sought.
3. Review WSDOT’s DBE Program by collecting and evaluating program administrative documents and conduct various WSDOT staff interviews
   a. Create a comparison of state-funded contracts and the availability versus utilization of minority, veteran, and women’s business enterprises
4. Identify potential communication partners
a. Public and private sector
5. Collect datapoints for potentially matching contractors
   a. WSDOT prior contractors, sub-contractors and bidders for the past 5-years
   b. Washington State contractor license information
   c. Secondary data limited by primary NAICS categories
7. Create market area definitions in collaboration with WSDOT as informed by data collected above and through general economic data specific to regions within the state.
8. Develop survey instrument(s)
   a. Multi-step process with client
9. Develop marketing materials
   a. Letters
   b. Post cards
      i. Mailing
      ii. Handout
   c. Graphic images for online use

Data Collection Stage
10. Launch data collection
    a. Email appeal
    b. Direct mail with 2 follow-ups
    c. Partner marketing
    d. 6-week social media campaign
    e. Outbound reminder telephone calls
       i. 3 maximum to non-responders after week 3

Data Analysis Stage
11. Dataset management
    a. Cross tab data by:
       i. Raw
       ii. Those uninterested in working with WSDOT
       iii. Those with insurmountable barriers to working with WSDOT
       iv. Those interested in working with WSDOT needing help with barriers
       v. Those interested in working with WSDOT but unsuccessful to date
       vi. Those who have contracted with WSDOT in study period
12. Conduct Analyses
    a. Use statistical methods to determine if any disparity exists
    b. Create diversity scenarios based on the various cross tabs
13. Conduct qualitative research
    a. Discussion groups (likely online) will be held to discuss emerging findings to better define and discover why respondents have indicated particular response patterns.
14. Prior work comparisons
   a. Compare to previous reports created for WSDOT with narrative describing variances in methodologies

Reporting Stage

15. Draft Report
16. In-person/remote presentation of findings
17. Finalize report

In considering this outline several required key factors should be acknowledged:

Initiate the study by preparing necessary outreach documents, conducting relevant meetings and preparing and maintaining a study website.
Accomplished in the primarily within the development stage but will require updating and follow-up sessions throughout the project.

As a call out we draw attention to the advisory committee function for this project with subject matter experts which will provide additional methodology review guidance and draft findings comments. This committee’s function will be to ensure a robust discussion of what is included and how while we would maintain the ultimate authority as to the research integrity.

Conduct monthly progress meetings with designated WSDOT representatives.
While not detailed in the project outline this would be scheduled as a reoccurring meeting.

Provide detailed monthly invoices with written progress reports.
As either a pre-meeting prep material item or as a follow-up these would be prepared monthly by the project manager.

Collect WSDOT contract data from local programs, consultant services and construction.
This data would be collected in the development stage.

Provide a relevant and detailed analysis of all collected contract data (quantitative data).
We would work with WSDOT to define what is intended by this requirement and produce it within the scope of the data made available. Additional data analysis (ie: cross tabs) may become relevant within the intial review of the data.

Review WSDOT’s DBE Program by collecting and evaluating program administrative documents and conduct various WSDOT staff interviews.
Conducted within the development stage.

Perform statewide meetings (in-person or via technology as appropriate) with stakeholders and DBEs to collect applicable anecdotal data.
As indicated in the proposed project plan, discussion groups would be conducted as part of the data analysis phase and used to better inform the quantitative data collected to date within the study. We typically prefer to use focus group information as a follow-up tool to help understand the quantitative data as it is more likely to find a stronger focus and becomes more usable within the final analysis.
Collect qualitative and quantitative evidence of discrimination.
Quantitative data would be collected via the survey interface and qualitative data would be collected as part of the discussion groups.

Provide detailed analysis of collected information (qualitative data).
In collected qualitative data we will utilize a discussion guide which will be developed in collaboration with WSDOT. The reporting structure for this data will mirror the discussion guide with key findings and pulled quotes as appropriate. While qualitative data does not lend itself to the same level of analyses as quantitative the two can be combined within reporting to be quite informative.

Collect relevant regional economic and business data and using contract data determine applicable market area.
As part of the development process we will use the WSDOT and other sourced information pertaining to contractors to identify clear market areas validating and further informing those areas using general economic data such as employment or commuting patterns.

Perform Disparity Analysis using DBE utilization estimates and the DBE availability estimates using statistical methods approved by the courts.
In reference to 49 CFR 26.45 we provide the following research process: Direct solicitation to all known potential contractors and a broad campaign to inform the industry that we are seeking their participation. A survey instrument seeking to understand their past and future intentions of seeking contracts/sub-contracts with WSDOT along with noting any barriers or reasons for non-interest. Using a statistical sample as a minimum threshold calculating the actual pool of available and interested contractors.

Within this data collection special attention will be paid to barriers and reasons for lack of interest in that both offer insights that could be applied in step 2 of the CFR.

The data collected will offer a wide range of potential cross tabs to further explore potential diversity scenarios – cases where specific types of diversity may be more represented or less.

Provide a comparison of state-funded contracts and the availability versus utilization of minority, veteran, and women’s business enterprises.
This data analysis will be completed in the development stage.

Provide a detailed Capacity Analysis including the methodology to be used.
The proposed methodology begins with a census style appeal with direct mail, paid advertising and direct phone calls to solicit participation. One of the end results of this work is identify in a statistical process the number of potential DBE contractors that exist and are interested in contracted work along with identifying barriers to doing so. A number of capacity analyses may be conducted based on this data point based on which base number is being used for comparison.

The survey would work towards a statistical reliability of a 95% confidence interval with a sample error of 3%. This depends upon a high participation rate which can never be assured, however, the statistical data collected will be compared with other primary and secondary data sources to identify any potential discrepancies of concern. This type of multiple lens statistical research is preferred by our team as it can lead to the identification of outliers which can be addressed.
Recommend overall DBE Goal setting methodology.
Based on the work proposed this would be included in the report but also discussed with WSDOT and its stakeholders as it is being formulated.

Provide DBE program recommendations.
Based on the work proposed this would be included in the report but also discussed with WSDOT and its stakeholders as it is being formulated.

Provide a draft study to WSDOT prior to public release.
Definitely!

Conduct statewide public outreach meetings to share study findings.
These sessions could be held as in-person events and/or as live stream events as mutually agreed.

Describe how your work plan addresses contingencies that may arise during the project
The timeline that would become connected to the work plan provides contingencies for a wide range of potential challenges. The largest external risk for this project is a low response rate where the use of time could be used to further market appeals. Internal to the project are risks of not receiving information from WSDOT or difficulty in scheduling key meetings.

Part B: Conflict Resolution Approach
Our reliance on collaboration and iteration provides a significant relief from potential conflicts. That being said, conflict can occur and are often created through miscommunication or misalignment of goals. Goals are developed in the early part of the project and are codified within the contract. Miscommunications can be resolved by communicating or by bringing together a larger group to review the situation and concur with a path forward.

Part C: Division of Work
The workplan details a number of items required from WSDOT, including: information on past contractors, sub-contractors and bidders for the past 5-years. WSDOT should also provide information about their selection process and be available to respond to questions. All other work will be performed by the Center.
Part D: Key Issues and Critical Milestones
The primary issue that may arise in this project is poor survey response. A poor response rate is likely to bias the data and create spurious results.

The key milestones are as follows:

- Completion of survey instrument
- Responses received from the required statistical level of the survey population for each defined market.
- Survey closes
- Discussion groups completed
- Analysis completed
- Project draft
- Finalized report accepted by client
Scoring Criteria 6: Investigation and Analysis
The Center for Economic and Business Research has significant experience researching discrimination and inequity in a variety of sectors. With respect to government contracting and the highway construction/consulting industry, we have worked with WSDOT on two related studies.

In 2020, we authored “Surety Bond Accessibility Study: OMWBE and HUB Contractors.” This study explored surety bond access for DBEs as a potential barrier to working with WSDOT. More recently, we completed a comprehensive “WSDOT Equity Study.” In this research we examine the equity of WSDOT’s property acquisitions, highway construction program investments, workforce representation, and overall distribution of benefits from WSDOT infrastructure. This study aimed to identify potential areas of inequity in need of further research.

Scoring Criteria 7: Continuous Improvement
As a research center located within a university, we believe it is crucial to develop a strong methodology and engage in a thorough peer review process. When it comes to working with clients, we involve them in every step of the research process and include stakeholder input wherever possible. This ensures that the final product meets client needs and is methodologically defensible.

We are able to have our work peer reviewed both internal to the University and to national research experts. We do present our work at national conferences and are routinely praised for our research design and are sought by our peers to review their work.

In considering this body of work we would seek to solicit feedback and to consider new processes or methodologies after completion to improve the process or future reports.
Scoring Criteria 8: DBE Participation

It is our intention to meet the DBE participation requirement through the use of a highly diversified advisory committee. In developing this response, we were informed by those that we approached that they would be unwilling to have their names placed in our proposal due to their own competing proposals. These parties have said they would be willing to engage if we are selected and we would seek additional members for this critical role.

Because of our range of in-house services at Western Washington University sub-contracting is not necessary at the same scale as might be found in the private sector. In this regard we reference Western’s commitment to ADEI in its hiring practices and in the employment found in our own research center which is much more highly diverse than found in the private sector for the field.

In reference specifically to appendix A of 49 CFR 26 we have:

1. Specifically researched potential partners for this project and made contact with multiple of them with a response of being interested but not willing to be named in a proposal. We also recognize that WSDOT and its stakeholders may have suggestions for members of the advisory committee which should be considered.
2. We have selected a powerful and substantial part of the project to have a DBE role if selected and are committed to that level of involvement.
3. We have established a significant hourly rate estimate for such sub-contractors as to maximize the ability to attract and retain such involvement.

The CFR specifically references that a promise to utilize DBEs is insufficient. Our good faith documentation here demonstrates that we have made contact and have individuals interested in participating but wish to not to named at this stage of the process due to their own competing submissions.