



Washington State
**DEPARTMENT OF
ENTERPRISE SERVICES**

SUPPLIER DIVERSITY – PRE-BID CONFERENCES WASHINGTON CONTRACTS FOR GOODS/SERVICES

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PRESENTERS

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OVERVIEW



- Department of Enterprise Services (DES) is the state's lead procurement agency.
- DES also procures and manages around 200 statewide contracts with around 1,500 vendors.
- DES is responsible for developing and implementing procurement policies and procedures for Washington agencies.

STATUTORY DIRECTIVE



RCW 39.26.005

Legislature intends that the state develop procurement policies, procedures, and materials that encourage and facilitate state agency purchase of goods and services from Washington small businesses.



RCW 39.26.090

Developing procurement policies and procedures, that encourage and facilitate the purchase of goods and services from **Washington small businesses, microbusinesses, and minibusiness, and minority and women-owned businesses** to the maximum extent practicable . . .



Executive Order

EO 22-01: Equity in Public Contracting requires cabinet agencies to use the Tools for Equity to improve the scope and equity of public spending in Washington

2019 DISPARITY STUDY

State of Washington
Disparity Study
2019



“ . . . Minorities and White women do not enjoy equal access to all aspects of State contracting opportunities . . . Some remedial action is warranted and necessary to ensure non-discrimination in State contracting.”

One recommended action: conduct pre-bid conferences in order increase the possibility for small firms to win State contracts



CH COLETTE
HOLT
& ASSOCIATES

SUPPLIER DIVERSITY POLICY

SUPPLIER DIVERSITY POLICY AND HANDBOOK

- Enterprise Services Policy No. [POL-DES-090-06](#) – Supplier Diversity
 - Effective April 1, 2023
- [Supplier Diversity Virtual Handbook](#)



Enterprise Services Policy No. POL-DES-090-06

Supplier Diversity

Applies to: Any procurement by the executive and judicial branches of state government, including state agencies, departments, offices, divisions, boards, commissions, institutions of higher education as defined in [RCW 28B.10.015](#) and correctional and other types of institutions ([RCW 39.26.010\(1\)](#)) ([RCW 39.26.100](#)) ([RCW 39.26.102](#)) governed by RCW 39.26.

Authorizing sources:

- State Law [RCW 39.26.090\(6\)](#)
- State Law [RCW 39.26.005](#)
- State Law [RCW 39.26.240](#)
- State Law [RCW 39.26.245](#)
- State Law [RCW 39.26.160\(3\)\(b\)](#)
- State Law [RCW 43.60A.200](#)
- State Law [RCW 39.26.010](#)
- [Executive Order 19-01](#)
- [Executive Order 22-01](#)
- [DES Policy 210-01](#)

Related sources:

- [Executive Order 05-03](#)

Effective date: April 1, 2023

Last update: N/A

Sunset review date: 5 years from Effective date

Approved by:  Tara C. Smith, Director


Reason for Policy

The Legislature has directed the Department of Enterprise Services to develop procurement policies and procedures that encourage and facilitate the purchase of goods and services from Washington small businesses, microbusinesses, minibusinesses, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses to the maximum extent practicable. Supplier diversity adds value such as innovation, quality improvements, efficiencies, and cost savings.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all procurement professionals and those with acquisition responsibilities use approved, legally compliant strategies that encourage and facilitate the purchase of goods and services from small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses to the maximum extent possible. Agencies must take action to remove barriers that prevent small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses from receiving equitable access to state goods and services procurements.

SUPPLIER DIVERSITY TOOLS

- C-1 – Forecasting
- C-2 – Outreach
- C-3 – Unbundling
- C-4 – Contracts under \$150,000
- C-5 – Pre-bid Conferences
- C-6 – Solicitation/Contract Language
- C-7 – Other Strategies
- C-8 – Transparency



Open the
Market to
Small/Vet bus's

PRE-BID CONFERENCES – WHAT AND WHY

- “Pre-bid Conference” is a meeting held by the agency with potential bidders shortly after the solicitation is posted in WEBS.
- Several purposes:
 - Answering questions and clarifying any ambiguities, and
 - Responding to general issues in order to establish a common basis for understanding all of the requirements of the solicitation.

PRE-BID CONFERENCES – BENEFITS

- The benefits are that it:
 - Creates an opportunity for dialogue between vendors and the state to gain insight from the bidder community on potential solicitation requirements;
 - Allows agencies to hear from the bidder community regarding solicitation requirements; and
 - Provides an opportunity to help educate new bidders on the solicitation process.
- A pre-bid conference is in addition to the Q&A period, which typically provides a longer timeframe for businesses to ask questions about a solicitation.

PRE-BID CONFERENCES – MORE WHY!

- Think of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs!
 - I can't respond unless I know what I'm responding to, and why/how I should respond.
 - If I don't know the basics, I can't even think about the specifics.
 - Don't breeze through the "boilerplate".
- Anecdotally, it in essence of kicks off Q&A, and the vendor's "thinking" about the Solicitation

PRE-BID CONFERENCES – WHEN ARE THEY **REQUIRED**

- Solicitations that:
 - have a value of \$500,000 or more; or
 - a duration of longer than four months; or
 - could result in multiple-awarded contracts; or
 - an agency is aware that more than 50% of the cost of a resulting contract will be distributed amongst multiple subcontractors; or
 - where a Statement of Work contains technical language, the specification is difficult to understand, or is an innovative or specialized product or service.
- But really, they are extremely helpful in far more situations

SOME PRE-BID BEST PRACTICES

- Assign a note-taker to catch all questions
- Consider recording the meeting (in Teams or Zoom)
- Listen carefully and ask questions ... a pre-bid can be a learning tool for you as well as vendors
- Vendor questions at the pre-bid can point out unforeseen holes or errors in the solicitation ... in time to amend them

THE Q&A PERIOD AND THE PRE-BID

- The question-and-answer period of a solicitation typically starts the day after a solicitation is posted to WEBS and lasts until a week before a bid closes.
 - All questions of a potential bidder should be answered during the Q&A period – publicly.
 - ... in a Q&A amendment posted to WEBS
 - Vendor questions at the pre-bid are similarly answered in a Q&A amendment and posted

PRE-BID CONFERENCES – RESOURCES

- The Supplier Diversity Handbook has a listing of Best Practices, a template, and a pre-bid checklist
 - [Supplier Diversity Virtual Handbook](#)
 - [Best Practices](#)
 - [Prebid Template](#)
 - [Pre-bid Checklist](#)

QUESTIONS

THANK YOU



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