

Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract Program
Recently Asked Questions – SBA Replies

Question:

After I have become certified. What is the best way to locate contracts? Also, I have never applied for a government contract before. Can your office assist me through the process? What would be the first step in working with your office?

Reply:

There are a couple ways to locate contracts. The government maintains a database with all contracts open to bid called Federal Business Opportunities. You can find this database at www.fbo.gov and you can search by contracts that are set-asides under the WOSB program. On this site you can also find upcoming events with contracting officials from federal agencies. The other resource we would recommend you utilize is reaching out to each agency's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU). They are the small business advocate at each agency and are your best entry point into any agency. Think about which agencies would be most likely to purchase your company's products and services and then reach out to that agency's OSDBU. Contact information for each OSDBU is available at www.osdbu.gov. You can also visit your local SBA office, Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), Small Business Development Center or Women's Business Center for more information. Visit www.sba.gov to find the location closest to you.

Question:

I AM IN THE PROCESS OF PUTTING A GROUP HOME FOR ELDERS TOGETHER. I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT CAN I USE FROM THE (WOSB) PROGRAM ONCE I COMPLETE MY NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION. THANK YOU

Reply:

This program is open only for "for profit" companies. You may want to consider looking into federal grants that are often open to non-profit organizations. Visit www.grants.gov for more information.

Question:

I raised an issue that many COs and SBA Small Business Advocates don't know or understand the 8(m) Program. When I speak to them they think they are fulfilling all set asides under the Small Business Set Aside. Also, they think that only a woman owned manufacturer can bid on a manufacturer NAICS codes. I think this is a primary reason why we are seeing so few WOSB and EDWOSB opportunities being posted? What is being done to rectify this?

Reply:

With any new program it does take some time to ensure everyone is fully aware and trained on the program. That is our current focus at the SBA regarding this program: outreach and training. To make this program successful, two key ingredients must be in place: (1) we need to have capable, eligible women-owned small businesses aware of the program and certified and (2) we need agencies and their contracting officers fully trained on the program so that they can set-aside contracts for certified WOSBs to bid on. For the past 10 months and the coming months, we have been focused on conducting trainings and outreach events to both small businesses and federal agencies to ensure everyone is trained on the program to make sure it is a success.

We welcome any suggestions on any additional things we can do to push this forward.

Question:

Is there any consideration to adopt a Protege/Mentor Program for the 8(m) as there is the for 8(a)?

Reply:

Yes! As part of the Small Business Jobs Act that was signed into law by the President in 2010, it gave the SBA the authority to implement a Mentor-Protégé program not only for the WOSB program, but also for the Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) program and the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business program. We are in the process of developing these programs and will be rolling them out in the coming year.

Question:

How does the owner obtain permission to access GLS in order to upload the documentation? Also, which SBA office is responsible for trouble shooting GLS problems?

Reply:

Any small business can gain access to GLS. Go to <https://eweb.sba.gov/gls/> and on the left hand side you will find instructions on how to utilize GLS, as well as a link to request an ID. If you have any questions regarding GLS, you can contact SBA Security – there is also a link on that same page with their contact information. For those of you who aren't familiar with GLS, it is the "General Login System" and is the system that SBA is utilizing for the WOSB program. To certify for the program, you must request an ID and gain access to the WOSB repository. In the repository, you need to upload documents that prove you meet the eligibility requirements for the program. Visit www.sba.gov/wosb for more information.

Question:

I would like to know WHEN we will begin to see these projects posted of FBO?

Reply:

Actually, a number of contracts have already been posted on FBO (Federal Business Opportunities) for the WOSB program and over 40 have been awarded to date. I just checked www.fbo.gov and right now there are 57 WOSB set-aside contracts listed and 29 EDWOSB set-aside contracts listed.

Question:

Will the SBA set third party certifiers for EDWOSB's as they have for WOSB's in the near future? In determining a EDWOSB's personal net worth, you state that the fair market value of her primary residence be declared in her assets and then states that the equity interest can be excluded. Does this not take away from the fair market value of the asset? Please explain.

Reply:

Actually, 3 of the 4 third party certifiers the SBA has approved provide certification for both WOSB and EDWOSB. Those 3 are: • El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce • National Women Business Owners Corporation • US Women's Chamber of Commerce The Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) provides only WOSB certification. In terms of your question regarding personal net worth and what needs to be excluded and what doesn't need to be excluded, please refer to our Compliance guide which you can find at: http://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/WOSB%20Compliance%20Guide_April2011.pdf. You will find information about net worth on page 24.

Question:

Is there a plan in place to raise the 4 million construction for a set aside? In my industry that is becoming a lower threshold every day.

Reply:

There is a threshold for how large the contracts may be that are awarded under the WOSB program and it is \$6M for manufacturing contracts and \$4M for all other contracts. These thresholds are set by Congress in statute, so unfortunately we do not have the authority to change that. Please note that this is the threshold for how large the dollar amount of the contract awarded can be – it is NOT the threshold for a business's revenues. The threshold for a business is based on its North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code. Each NAICS code has a different threshold for what is considered small. Visit www.sba.gov/size to find out the size standard threshold for your business's NAICS code.

Question:

When will we see WOSB addressed in FAR?

Reply:

The WOSB is already in the FAR (Federal Acquisition Regulation). It was published in early April of this year.

Question:

Is someone at the SBA tracking the actual number of WOSB set aside contracts? We haven't seen many, does the SBA have a plan to ensure there are more WOSB Set Aside contracts in FY12?

Reply:

Yes, we do track the number of WOSB set-aside contracts on a regular basis. To date, over 40 WOSB set-aside contracts have been awarded and over 100 have been put out for solicitation. Visit www.fbo.gov to find these contracts.

Question:

how can i apply for this loan

Reply:

To clarify, the WOSB Federal Contract program is a not a loan program. It is a program to ensure WOSBs get their fair share of federal contracts awarded by the government. So if you are a small business that produces goods and/or services that the government buys, you can enter into a contract with the government to provide them goods/services and they will pay you in return. If you are interested in loans, please feel free to visit www.sba.gov or your local district office to find out more information about SBA's loans programs.

Question:

We have had our GSA contract for over a year. What is the best way to get a face to face meeting with our OSDUBU's? When we've called they won't meet with us.

Reply:

I would suggest visiting www.osdbu.gov to find the best contact information for OSDBUs. You can also go to www.fbo.gov to find out events they will be attending or hosting.

Question:

I'm experiencing difficulties in participating in the chat. Is there anyone I can speak with after today's chat with questions on concerning the repository?

Reply:

Pamela - Our apologies regarding the technical difficulties related to the chat. We are up and running now. In terms of questions about the repository, feel free to send any questions to wosb@sba.gov.

Question:

Other than uploading the required documentation to the SBA Repository, what suggestions do you have for WOSBs to be prepared for upcoming contract opportunities?

Reply:

Yes, you need to upload your required documentation to the repository, but you also need to make sure you go to CCR and ORCA to represent your status as a WOSB. After that, make sure you are marketing your business to the appropriate federal agencies that are most likely to purchase products and services your company offers. Visit www.fbo.gov to find out about matchmaking opportunities and get in touch with agencies's Offices of Small and Disadvantaged Business utilization to learn more about specific contracting opportunities. You can also visit your local SBA office or a Procurement Technical Assistance Center - they both can help you go after that first federal contract.

Question:

Does a person need to have a background in contract management, logistics, or acquisition to get a federal contract? Are there federal contracts available for consulting, cutting grass or event cleaning?

Reply:

Federal contracts are awarded in a wide variety of industries. For more information, you can visit the Federal Procurement Data System and it can show you all the industries that federal contracts have been awarded in.

Question:

Is certification required to take advantage of the set asides? Where do I learn how to get certified?

Reply:

Yes, in order to bid on a WOSB set-asides, you must meet all the requirements of the program and be certified. Visit www.sba.gov/wosb for information on how to certify.

Question:

The NAICS Code link off the website gives \$ 4million and \$6.5million as max tresholds, but the powerpoint presentations mentions \$ 3 million and \$5 million. Could you please provide an explanation?

Reply:

Thanks for pointing out the discrepancy. The threshold (and please again note that it is not a threshold for the size of your business - it is a threshold for the size of the contract you may be awarded) is \$6.5M for manufacturing contracting and \$4M for all others.

Question:

How do I find out my login and password to the General Login System of the SBA if I can't remember it?

Reply:

Go to the main page for the General Login System on the left hand side there is an area to help you recover your user name or password.

Question:

Do WOSBs still have the choice of self-certifying or using one of SBA's authorized third party sources? If that's still true, are there benefits to using the third party source? I am wondering why a WOSB would/should choose third party certification since it requires the expenditure of time and money whereas self-certification does not cost anything.

Reply:

Yes, by statute, firms have the option of choosing whether to self-certify or obtain third party certification. From a contract award perspective, there is no benefit for doing one over the other. It is a personal choice of what your business would like to do.

Question:

Can you please explain the difference between EDWOSBs and WOSBs, their eligibility within the program and the difference with NAICS codes? How can I determine my Primary NAICS code for the purpose of getting certified? What documents would you use verify this stream of income? Once I am certified, how can I gain access to the contract opportunities?

Reply:

The difference between EDWOSBs and WOSBs is a couple different things: EDWOSBs need to meet additional requirements regarding income and net worth. The benefit of being a EDWOSB is that you will be eligible for set-aside contracts in more industries. Contracting officers may set-aside WOSB contracts only in industries that women have been substantially underrepresented, while they can set-aside EDWOSB contracts only in industries women have been underrepresented. WOSBs can compete only for WOSB set-aside while EDWOSB can compete for both WOSB and EDWOSB set-asides.

Question:

if you are a SBA approved 8(a) firm, what paperwork do you need to put into the repository if you are woman-owned too.

Reply:

If you are currently an active 8(a) firm, if you want to certify for the WOSB program, you are actually automatically qualified as EDWOSB as long as you meet the requirements for being women-owned. You need to go to CCR and make sure you say you are EDWOSB. Then in the repository, submit your original 8(a) certification along with your SBA form 2414. If you are a joint venture, provide your documentation for that as well. Then make sure you also go to ORCA to represent your status. Good luck!

Question:

Has the SBA considered readdressing the possibility of sole source contracts similar to the 8(a) program?

Reply:

Thanks for your note, but unfortunately, the statute for the WOSB program (which is set by Congress) does not provide us authority to authorize sole source contracts under this program.

Question:

How do I become certified for this program?

Reply:

There are two ways to certify for this program: self-certification or third party certification. Please visit www.sba.gov/wosb - or feel free to visit your local SBA office to learn more.

Question:

Is there a resource available that provides a list of agencies that have yet to meet their 5% WOSB contracting requirements?

Reply:

You can view agencies' progress against their 5% WOSB contracting goal (along with the other goals) at smallbusiness.data.gov.

Question:

I am a PTAC counselor on Guam. My question is: Why is the SBA itself not certifying companies as WOSB's like the 8a or HUBZone program?

Reply:

By statute (which is set by Congress), the program must be a self-certification or third party certification program (unlike 8(a) and HUBZone).