

Bidder Information Guide

What are some common mistakes or omissions that I should try to avoid and things to keep in mind?

- Any bid that does not include a signed Statement of Intent Form(s) and the MBE/WBE Participation Affidavit is non-responsive and will be rejected.
- Any Statement of Intent Form(s) and/or MBE/WBE Participation Affidavit that are not properly executed or do not contain all required information will result in a finding of non-compliance and will be rejected.
- **Utilizing a business that is not certified with the City of Baltimore or that has an expired certification, without an extension due to a pending application for renewal, will not count towards meeting a MBE/WBE participation goal.** City Code Article 5, §28-41(d) states that each bidder is responsible for verifying that all MBEs and WBEs to be used have been certified by the Office before bid opening.
- The failure to exercise good faith efforts when requesting a waiver and not meeting the applicable MBE/WBE goals for the contract will result in a finding of non-compliance
- A business enterprise that is Baltimore City certified as both an MBE and WBE (M/WBE) may not be counted toward both the MBE and WBE goals for the same project. The bidder must select the goal to which the business enterprise is to be counted. Art. 5, §28-31(b) and §28-35.
- A bidder that is a City certified MBE/WBE may only count up to 50% of the dollar value of the work it intends to perform with its own forces toward the applicable MBE or WBE goal. The amount of credit may not exceed the MBE/WBE's available work capacity as calculated with the Contractor Prequalification rules. Intentions to count self-performance toward the MBE or WBE goal must be indicated on Part C: Statement of Intent to Self-Perform. A bidder's statement that they will self-perform, but the business is not City certified as a MBE/WBE, may result in the bid being found non-compliant.
- A bidder may count toward the contract goal the portion of its expenditure to a joint venture that is equal to the percentage of the MBE or WBE participation in the joint venture. The MBE or WBE member of the joint venture must have an interest in the control, management, risks and operation of the joint venture commensurate with the member's percentage of ownership. The MBE or WBE member of the joint venture must be responsible for a clearly defined portion of the work to be performed, equal to its share in the ownership, control and management of the joint venture. Art. 5, §28-33.

- A bidder may not count toward its contract goal any agreement with a certified MBE or WBE subcontractor who intends to subcontract more than 10% of the dollar amount of the services to be performed under its agreement with the bidder. This restriction does not apply to an MBE/WBE that contracts for the purchase of materials, equipment or supplies that are incidental to the performance of services under its agreement with the bidder. Art. 5, §28-34.
- A bidder may count toward the contract goal its entire expenditure to a certified MBE or WBE that manufactures the goods supplied. Art. 5, §28-36.
- Only 25% of each contract goal may be attained by expenditures to MBEs and WBEs that are non-manufacturing suppliers. Art. 5, §28-37.
- A bidder may count toward the contract goals only the fees or commissions charged by an MBE or WBE insurance company or travel agent. Art. 5, §28-38.
- A bidder may count toward the contract goals only the fees charged and earned by an MBE or WBE financial institution. Art. 5, §28-39.
- A bidder may not use an MBE or WBE to meet a contract goal if the bidder has a financial interest in, has an interest in the ownership or control of, or is significantly involved in the operation of the MBE or WBE. Art. 5§28-41.

Is there any limitation of what services an MBE/WBE can perform that count towards the contract participation goals?

MBE/WBEs subcontractors must perform a commercially useful function. Commercially useful function is defined in the City Code as the performance of real and distinct work for which the business enterprise has the skill, expertise, and actual responsibility to perform, manage and supervise. Art. 5, §28-32. As a result, the bidder should think broadly and consider all functions and services necessary to fully perform the contract.

Can I get a waiver of the contract participation goals?

If a bidder is unable to comply with a contract goal, the bidder may submit a waiver request with the bid. The waiver request must be made on the MBE/WBE Participation Waiver Request Form. A waiver will not be granted unless the waiver request includes documentation that demonstrates good faith efforts to meet the goals. Art. 5, §28-62. The bidder should have previously consulted the SMBA&D certification directory, <https://baltimorecity.diversitycompliance.com/>, and made attempts to secure MBE/WBE subcontractor participation.

Each waiver request must include documentation of your good faith efforts to secure, contact and negotiate with MBEs and WBEs, including:

(1) The reasons your company is unable to secure sufficient MBE/WBE participation to meet the stated goals;

(2) The efforts made by your company to select portions of the contract to be performed by MBEs and WBEs; &

(3) For each MBE or WBE that placed a bid that you consider to be unacceptable, a statement that explains the basis for that conclusion.

Each waiver is reviewed individually, highly scrutinized, and will not be granted if the bidder's submission does not evidence that they undertook several steps to secure participation in good faith.

What are "good faith efforts"?

SMBA&D uses the term good faith efforts in several contexts including bid participation forms, waivers, and in evaluating efforts to meet contract participation goals by bidders. All efforts must begin with an evaluation of the availability of certified MBE/WBEs to perform the contract services by consulting the SMBA&D certification directory:

<https://baltimorecity.diversitycompliance.com/>

If there are certified MBE/WBEs that can provide the goods or services under the contract the contractor/vendor must undertake efforts to contact those businesses, secure price quotes, and exercise diligence in determining if they have the capabilities and expertise to perform. The availability of MBE/WBEs strongly undercuts any request for participation goals to be waived.

The following are additional examples of actions that can show that efforts were undertaken in good faith to meet the applicable contract goals, including but not limited to:

- The bidder should solicit interest as early in the acquisition process as practicable to allow the MBE/WBEs to respond to the solicitation and submit a timely offer for the subcontract. The bidder should determine with certainty if the MBE/WBEs are interested by taking appropriate steps to follow-up on initial solicitations.
- The bidder should identify portions of the work to be performed by MBE/WBEs in order to increase the likelihood that the MBE/WBE goals will be achieved. This includes, where appropriate, breaking out contract work items into economically feasible units (for example, smaller tasks or quantities) to facilitate MBE/WBE participation, even when the prime contractor might otherwise prefer to perform these work items with its own forces. This may include, where possible, establishing flexible timeframes for performance and delivery schedules in a manner that encourages and facilitates MBE/WBE participation.
- The bidder should provide interested MBE/WBEs with adequate information about the plans, specifications, and requirements of the contract in a timely manner to assist them in responding to a solicitation with their offer for the subcontract.
- A bidder using good business judgment would consider a number of factors in negotiating with subcontractors, including MBE/WBE subcontractors, and would take a

firm's price and capabilities as well as contract goals into consideration. However, the fact that there may be some additional costs involved in finding and using MBE/WBEs is not sufficient reason for a bidder's failure to meet the contract MBE/WBEs goal, as long as such costs are reasonable and not excessive.

- The bidder should engage in negotiations in good faith with interested MBE/WBEs. It is the bidder's responsibility to make a portion of the work available to MBE/WBEs subcontractors and suppliers and to select those portions of the work or material needed that is consistent with the available MBE/WBEs subcontractors and suppliers, so as to facilitate MBE/WBEs participation.
- Evidence of such negotiation includes: the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of MBE/WBEs that were considered; a description of the information provided regarding the plans and specifications for the work selected for subcontracting; and evidence as to why additional agreements could not be reached for MBE/WBEs to perform the work.
- Bidders should include detailed information regarding their attempts to secure participation. SMBA&D cannot accept unsupported statements about efforts to secure MBE/WBE participation. **All waivers must include documentation of those efforts.** For example: you should include email correspondence with subcontractors to show their response or lack of response.
- It is insufficient to simply state that you contacted a business and provide their directory entry or contact information. It is insufficient to make arguments why you believe the goals should be waived and you should be permitted to perform the entire contract with no participation goals. It is insufficient to detail that the contract was previously granted a waiver or that you were previously awarded this contract. A promise to use MBE/WBEs after contract award is not considered to be responsive to the contract solicitation or to constitute good faith efforts. Also, the ability or desire of a prime contractor to perform the work of a contract with its own organization does not relieve the bidder of the responsibility to make good faith efforts or to meet the contract MBE/WBE participation goals.
- It is the bidder's responsibility to establish and document the efforts that were undertaken to secure MBE/WBE participation. **Waivers are judged solely based upon the information provided and detailed to SMBA&D in the bid submission.**
- There are numerous ways to identify subcontractors to participate on the contract such as: the SMBA&D certification directory, <https://baltimorecity.diversitycompliance.com/>, attending pre-bid information sessions, business matchmaking meetings and events, advertising and/or written notices, posting of Notices of Sources Sought and/or Requests for Proposals, and/or written notices or emails to all MBE/WBEs listed in SMBA&D's directory that specialize in the services or goods required to perform the contract.

- MBE/WBEs should not be rejected as unqualified without sound reasons based on a thorough investigation of their capabilities. Factors such as the contractor's standing within their industry, membership in specific groups, organizations, or associations and political or social affiliations (for example union vs. non-union status) are not legitimate causes for the rejection or non-solicitation of bids in the contractor's efforts to meet the project goal.
- Bidders should make reasonable efforts, if needed, to assist interested MBE/WBEs in obtaining bonding, lines of credit, insurance, or related assistance or services as required by the subcontractor.
- Contacting and utilizing the services of available minority/women community organizations; minority/women contractors' groups; local, State, and Federal minority/women business assistance offices (including SMBA&D); and other organizations as allowed on a case-by-case basis to assist in the recruitment and placement of MBE/WBEs. When considering a waiver, you should contact SMBA&D if you feel as though you have exhausted the ability to identify additional MBE/WBEs who could perform on the contract.

SMBA&D will evaluate all of the detailed efforts in determining if the bidder has exercised good faith efforts.