



“WBE”

Why is it important to you?

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Are you a woman entrepreneur looking to launch a new business or maybe an established women business owner eager to grow your business? If so, you may want to consider obtaining certification as a Wisconsin Woman-Owned Business Enterprise (“WBE”). Unlike some certifications where the return may not be worth the investment of taking the time to fill out the application, obtaining WBE certification may create exciting new business opportunities that can really boost your company’s bottom line and give your company an advantage in the marketplace.

WHAT IS IT?

The state of Wisconsin has created a program that provides woman-owned businesses with a credible certification process that validates their business ownership. In 2006, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted a bill that required the Wisconsin Department of Administration “to develop, maintain, and keep a computer database of businesses in the state that are owned by women, containing demographic statistics and information on the types of industries represented, sales volume and growth rates, generation of jobs by both new and existing businesses, and any other relevant characteristics.” Businesses that wish to participate in the program must be certified by the Wisconsin Department of Administration through an application process. Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter 83 sets forth the criteria and procedures for certification, certification renewal, recertification, and decertification of woman-owned businesses.

HOW DO I OBTAIN CERTIFICATION?

In order to obtain WBE certification, a business must meet the following minimum core requirements:

- Be at least 51% owned, controlled, and actively managed by women group members (this could be just one woman).
- Currently performing a “useful business function” in the state of Wisconsin.
- The woman owner(s) must have owned the business as a 51% owner for at least one year.
- Pay a \$150.00 application fee made payable to the Department of Administration.

- Proof of ethnicity and citizenship for each owner, such as birth certificates, green cards, passports, tribal memberships, etc.
- Current bank signature cards for business account(s) including depository and borrowing resolutions.
- Business tax returns for the past three years.
- List of major capital assets, such as property, office/facilities, equipment, vehicles, etc.
- Current business financial statements (profit and loss statement and balance sheet).
- Leases and other third-party agreement(s), such as working arrangements with other firms, supplier/distributorship agreements, rental leases, etc.
- Three samples of evidence of revenue for firm, such as completed-signed contracts, receipts, invoices, etc.
- Evidence of certification with a MBE, WBE, or DVB certifying entity.
- Relevant license and permits.
- Resumes/biographies of owners and potentially key employees outlining business experiences.
- Assumed name documents (d/b/a or a/k/a).

Depending on what type of business entity you are (e.g., a corporation or a limited liability company), there are additional documents that must be submitted. Fortunately, the Department of Administration has a secure application website that makes submitting applications and uploading supporting documentation a smoother process. Certification generally takes between four to six weeks. However, if an application is

incomplete when submitted or if there are questions or requests for additional information, this timeframe can be delayed. Sometimes, an on-site visit is even required.

WHY SHOULD I OBTAIN CERTIFICATION?

Although compiling the necessary documentation and submitting the application may be lengthy and frustrating, obtaining WBE certification can be worth the challenging process. Many public corporations as well as local, state, and federal government purchasing or procurement agencies are incentivized or have programs for allotting a certain percentage of business to women-owned companies. Therefore, getting certified as a WBE may present opportunities to land a project that were not previously available or make the difference between landing a project or not. Certification on its own does not guarantee additional business, but when combined with strategic marketing it can help grow your business.

In addition to Wisconsin certification, there are also processes to obtain women-owned certification in other states and some certifications are more nationally recognized. If you believe that obtaining WBE certification could give your business the advantage that you are looking for, please contact us for additional information.



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However, the process is not this simple. In addition to these four absolutes, a successful applicant must also register and complete a lengthy application, including providing detailed business information and submitting various supporting documents. All businesses must submit the following documents, as applicable: