



DIVISION OF SMALL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

Frequently Asked Questions: About Certification

Why should my business get certified?

One or more certifications provides your business an opportunity to bid on or partner with another contractor on the city's projects that have goals established. Your business will be listed in our online certified vendor directory, which is used when agencies or primes are seeking certified firms to engage with on a contract to meet a project goal. In addition, you will have access to business development resources, mentoring, and networking that are reserved for certified firms. In short, certification opens up opportunity for you to grow and thrive.

What is the best certification for my business?

It depends on what type of work you are seeking to perform and which entities you wish to work with. If you are already applying for one certification and meet the requirements for others, it's helpful to apply for more than one at the same time. We also recommend that you ask your clients what certifications they recognize. We are glad to help you figure out which certifications make the most sense for your business.

How do I apply for a local certification?

All certifications are completed online. Start at: <https://denver.mwdbe.com/vendorstart.asp>. If you are a first-time user, you must first create an account.

How does DSBO communicate with me about my certification?

Most of the communications that DSBO sends out comes from our Small Business Certification and Contract Management System, so make sure to add denver@mwdbe.com to your safe sender list.

How do I apply for a certification using minimal time?

We recommend that you review the rules and regulations under its ordinance, gather all required documentation, attend a certification informational session, and ask questions before you start the application process. You have 90 days to complete an application once it has been started, or it will be purged from our system and you will have to start over.

Is there a fee to get certified?

Yes, there is an application processing fee to get certified through the local program. It is a \$200 non-refundable fee for a new certification, and a \$50 non-refundable fee annually for renewal of certifications. There is no fee for the DBE Program.

Is there a length-of-time-in-business requirement?

For the federal DBE program, you simply need to be actively in business. However, for Denver's local certifications, your firm must have been in business for six months or had sustained business activity for six months in the local marketplace.

How do I add, remove, or replace my NAICS?

If you are looking to add NAICS Codes to your certification, you can now do that through your file in the Small Business Certification and Contract Management System.

When adding NAICS Code(s) please select the best 6-digit corresponding Index code(s) that your firm self-performs. To find those codes go to <https://www.census.gov/naics>.

Please make sure to have the REQUIRED documents ready to upload into the system to support your requested change.

- A copy of the signed contract with the complete scope of work.
- A list of equipment the firm owns or leases.
- Applicable education, experience, or expertise, including professional or contractor licenses (e.g., master electrician license, electrical contractor license, drywall supervisor/contractor)

[Please review this information about your NAICS Code and how to change it.](#)

What is a NAICS Code?

A NAICS (pronounced "nakes") Code is a classification within the North American Industry Classification System. The NAICS System was developed for use by Federal Statistical Agencies for the collection, analysis and publication of statistical data related to our economy.

NAICS codes are six-digit numbers that describe specific business sectors a company's business may fall under. These codes use a hierarchy structure which is the relationship of one item in a particular category.

- The first 2-digits designate the sector, such as (23) Construction.
- The 3-digit code is the subsector, so (236) would be Construction of Buildings.
- The 6-digit code is the National Industry, and there will be a several codes under that main code.
 - 236220 is Commercial and Institutional Building construction (Main Code) and it covers anything and everything in that group.
 - Under that code you can select a specific industry. For example, If your company does construction on schools and parking garages, you would select both: 236220 – Parking Garage construction and 236220 – School Building Construction.

You can search for NAICS codes at <https://www.census.gov/naics>.

Why are NAICS Codes important?

There are many reasons why you should carefully consider your NAICS codes.

The NAICS Codes that you are certified in will be listed on your profile and on your certification letter. Also, prime companies and agencies can search the firms by sorting with NAICS.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) uses NAICS codes to determine size standards. If you want to be classified as a small business, your company's revenues must be under a certain amount depending on your industry and NAICS codes.

Some agencies post contract bids to any business within a given NAICS code, such as the SBA through the System for Award Management (SAM) or the City and County of Denver through BidNet and Work4Denver.

Why do I have to supply financial information?

Financial documents provide evidence that an applicant is conducting the business as described in its application. Documents such as tax returns are used collectively to verify the eligibility of the business, ownership, management, and control by the owners. Our certification process does not evaluate the profitability or financial viability of your business.

What is a Personal Net Worth (PNW) statement?

A personal financial statement is a form or spreadsheet detailing a person's financial state and credit worthiness at a certain point in time. It indicates the difference between owner's assets and liabilities, and it should only represent the individual assets of the majority of owner of the firm. This is one of the certification eligibility requirements to prove that an applicant meets the definition of being socially or economically disadvantaged. A PNW is required for the majority owner if his or her ownership is at 51% or higher. If there is no majority owner, then all disadvantaged owners must submit a PNW.

Are my documents confidential once they are submitted?

The security of your information is a top priority for the city, and all submitted documents are treated with the utmost confidentiality. Once your application is submitted, DSBO certification staff can view the application during their review only if they explicitly have the required level of user access. All actions to access, view, update, and comment on your application are logged for auditing purposes. During the Certification Review Committee meetings, your file is reviewed by the Certification Committee, which is comprised of the DSBO staff. These employees sign a Confidentiality Agreement annually agreeing to keep all information confidential and proprietary with the understanding that any disclosure could cause harm to the applicant. As you can see, DSBO and the city take your privacy and the confidentiality of your information very seriously.

Who will see my documents?

DSBO certification staff can view the application during their review only if they explicitly have the required level of user access.

Who sits on the certification review committee?

The DSBO certification team is comprised of city employees, including the Certification Supervisor, the Certification Analysts, and the Certification Intake Officer.

Do I get a certification number or certificate?

No, but you do get a certification letter for each certification type you receive that you can attach or send out as needed. You can always access a copy of your certification letter in your vendor profile online in the Small Business Certification and Contract Management System. To view and print your certification letter(s), login and go to your current certifications. At the far right under "Actions," click "view." Scroll down to the Letters Sent and click "view" again. Your letter will show on your screen. Click the printer icon on the top left of your screen.

What if I do not have the required documents?

If the documentation requested is not applicable to your type of business, you must submit a written explanation on why the document is not applicable.

If I'm certified as a DBE, why do I need to be certified as a MWDBE/SBE?

DBE certified firms are eligible for opportunities and participation credit on federally funded project, while the local MWDBE/SBE certified firms are eligible for participation on locally funded city projects. Having multiple certifications increases your opportunity to participate on different types of projects both through the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the city.

If I am certified as a DBE already, will I be certified MWBE, SBE, and EBE automatically?

No. You will need to submit an application for each local certification program.

What is the difference between the ACDBE/DBE Certifications and the Local MWDBE/SBE/EBE program?

The ACDBE/DBE certification is managed by the U.S. Department of Transportation; projects awarded by DOT require the DBE certification. The local MWDBE/SBE/EBE certifications are funded with City and County of Denver dollars, and the local MWDBESBE/EBE certifications are utilized for projects on city owned land. Because of its application being unique to airports, the ACDBE certification is also managed by the Federal Aviation Administration.

If I have already started the DBE certification with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), can I start over with Denver?

Do not create duplicate applications. Once an application is completed and submitted for approval with the Department of Transportation (DOT) for a DBE certification, you cannot submit another DBE application with the City and County of Denver.

How long does it take to process my certification(s)?

Once your application is complete, it can take up to 90 days. If we are still asking you for more documentation, the process can be delayed and it can take longer. All applications are processed in the order that they are received. The process includes the intake for the applications, assignments to the certification analysts, the analysis of the application and all documentation, the on-site review, the consideration of our certification committee, and then the determination itself.

How long do I have to complete my application?

Applications that are open but not completed will be purged from the system after 90 days. After that time, you will be required to start a new application and pay the non-refundable application fee.

What is the timeline if I have completed my application, but I did not respond to DSBO's inquiries?

If you do not respond to inquiries, your application will be purged from the system in 90 days. You will be required to start a new application and pay the non-refundable application fee.

What guideline does DSBO use to certify firms?

DSBO uses the Denver Revised Municipal Code (D.R.M.C.) when looking at eligibility for firms seeking local EBE/MWBE/SBE/SBEC certification, and the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) for firms seeking the ACDBE/DBE federal certifications. You may wish to review these regulations before applying for certification: Denver Revised Municipal Codes (D.R.M.C.), Title I, Chapter 28, [Article III](#) and [Article VII](#) as well as the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.), [Title 49, Part 26](#), Subpart A, B, D and E.

What is an on-site visit?

This visit is the process to verify that your firm is an on-going independent small business and that it meets the eligibility requirements for certification. An analyst will meet with and interview the majority owner and tour the business and office area. If your business is home-based, we will do the on-site review at your home office.

How long is a certification valid?

All certifications are now valid for three years, but each year you are required to submit a no-change affidavit and updated business tax returns to verify eligibility. It is your responsibility to keep your certification current.

Are extensions given if my certification has expired?

No, DSBO must be able verify that all certified firms meet the eligibility requirements. It is your responsibility to maintain the certification of your business as your ability to successfully bid on projects as a certified firm depends on it, and there are no exceptions. You may find that you want to bid on a project, only to discover that your certification has lapsed--so be careful to keep your certifications current.

Is certification transferable through acquiring, inheritance, or other methods?

A company's certification is not transferable. DSBO certifies a firm based upon the ownership of the applicant firm by an eligible majority owner. If the business is sold, the certification is no longer valid.

After being certified, where can I see my company listed in a directory?

The local certification directory is contained in the Small Business Certification and Contract Management System database, denver.mwdbe.com. In addition, Colorado publishes this [ACDBE/DBE directory](#).

denvergov.org/dsbo
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