

# The Value of Diverse Business Certifications

A GUIDE TO  
UNDERSTANDING  
DIVERSE BUSINESS  
CERTIFICATION  
IN MISSOURI



PRESENTED BY THE  
MID-STATES AND  
MOUNTAIN PLAINS  
MINORITY SUPPLIER  
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

With contributions from the Small Business Administration; the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce; the Women's Business Development Center — Midwest; the State of Missouri Department of Equal Opportunity; the Missouri Department of Transportation; the Missouri Procurement Technical Assistance Center; Bi-State Development; the City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department; the Kansas City Area Transit Authority; and St. Louis Lambert International Airport

For businesses owned  
by people who are ethnic  
minorities, women, veterans,  
disabled or LGBTQ

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## A shared mission.

This guide to diverse business certification in Missouri was created through a partnership between the Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council and Mid-States Minority Development Council. It includes information about diverse business certification throughout the state of Missouri, including programs serving the national, federal, state and local levels. This information was gathered through research and interviews with more than 15 advisors at certifying organizations in both the public and private sector.



The Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council manages ethnic minority business certification in Western Missouri, including Kansas City. The Mid-States Minority Development Council manages ethnic minority business certification in Eastern Missouri, including St. Louis. These symbols help differentiate the two key regions in Missouri: Eastern and Western.



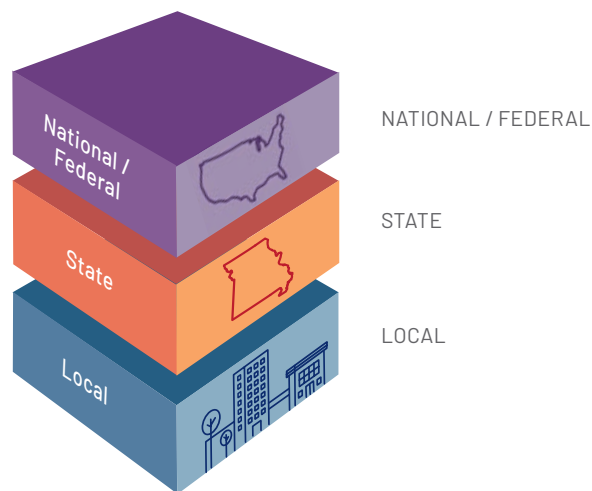
**Western Missouri** comprises 66 of the state's 114 counties, consisting of five areas: St. Joseph, Western, Southwestern, Southern and Central. The Minority Supplier Development Council's **Mountain Plains** office connects and empowers ethnic minority businesses in this region.



**Eastern Missouri** includes more than half of the population of Missouri, those who live in the counties of Crawford, Dent, Franklin, Gasconade, Iron, Jefferson, Lincoln, Maries, Phelps, Saint Charles, Saint Francois, Saint Genevieve, Saint Louis, Warren, Washington and the city of St. Louis. The Minority Supplier Development Council's **Mid-States** office connects and empowers ethnic minority businesses in this region.

## A comprehensive approach.

This guide includes information about certification in both the public and private sector. It covers local, state and national/federal programs.



These symbols help differentiate public sector and private sector certifications within this guide.



### **Public Sector**

The part of the economy composed of all levels of government (federal, state and local) and government-controlled enterprises.



### **Private Sector**

The part of the economy that is run by individuals and companies for profit and is not state controlled. It encompasses all for-profit businesses, including companies and corporations, that are not owned or operated by the government.

**“To make certification work  
for you, you need to not only  
understand it but ‘own it.’”**

—Carolyn Mosby, President and CEO, Mid-States  
Minority Supplier Development Council

WELCOME

Western Missouri



### Elevating opportunities

Was the American dream forged for all of us? How can diverse businesses achieve their dreams? I believe we begin with community. Working together, we can build bridges that help minority-owned businesses access capital, make connections and thrive.

Certification can empower you. All you need is a strong sense of your capabilities, a solid business strategy and genuine enthusiasm for your business.

Not sure which certification is right for you? This guide can help you focus on the designation you want and need. If you're interested in growing in the private sector, consider certification with the Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council. We're here to help!



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## Coming together to achieve the dream.

We created this guide to provide diverse businesses like yours with valuable information to help you grow.

Diverse business certification can open doors for you. Not only does it create opportunities, it puts you in the same room with potential business partners who are looking for you. Your certification — and relationship — with organizations like the Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council (MSDC) and Mid-States MSDC bring everything together. After all, it's our goal and our role to create wealth in the minority business community.

At the Mountain Plains and Mid-States MSDCs, we provide the gold standard for ethnic minority business certification. But we're not the only certifying bodies with a strong reputation. This guide highlights organizations both public and private that offer diverse certification in Missouri. Being certified in and of itself won't grow your business. Certification is a tool in your toolbox, and it's a big, important tool. Use it.

I've been involved with diverse business certification in the Mountain Plains region since 1998, and I know that corporations and public sector entities alike are eager to find and work with capable, qualified minority-owned businesses. The opportunities in Missouri are tremendous and growing — in Kansas City, St. Louis and other parts of the state. Let's grab them!



Stan Sena  
President and CEO  
Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council

## WELCOME

## Eastern Missouri



### Collaborate + Accelerate

This guide is a one-stop shop for diverse business certification in Missouri. My years in certification at the state level taught me how complicated the certification process can be. Missouri is an especially complex state because it offers so many opportunities for diverse businesses.

In the following pages, you'll find a wealth of information to help you tap into those opportunities as you develop your business strategy, weigh your options and consider certification. If you decide to pursue Minority Business Enterprise certification through our organization, we're here to help! Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.



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## Make certification work for you.

*Can you tell me about certification? Which type of certification do I need?* At our office, we receive calls every day from business owners looking for the answers to these questions. Those answers can be as complex as the variety of business owners in our community. Businesses may be certified as minority-owned, women-owned, disadvantaged, veteran or LGBTQ. Certifying bodies may be national, regional, state-wide, city-wide or specific to one area, like transportation. They may target the public sector or, like our organization, the private sector. It's a lot to take in, and it can be difficult to quickly share answers over the phone.

We created this handbook to get you the answers you need so you can understand certification and decide if it's right for you and your business. This handbook focuses on public and private sector certification in Missouri, although many concepts presented here could apply more broadly. Some certifying organizations, including ours, have a national focus.

Certification can be a valuable tool for your business — but only if it matches up with your business goals and vision. To make it work for you, you need to not only understand it but “own it.” May this handbook help you do just that.

All the best to you and your business!



Carolyn Mosby  
President and CEO  
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## WELCOME

## Meet our advisors



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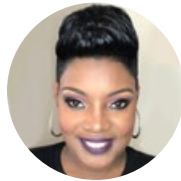
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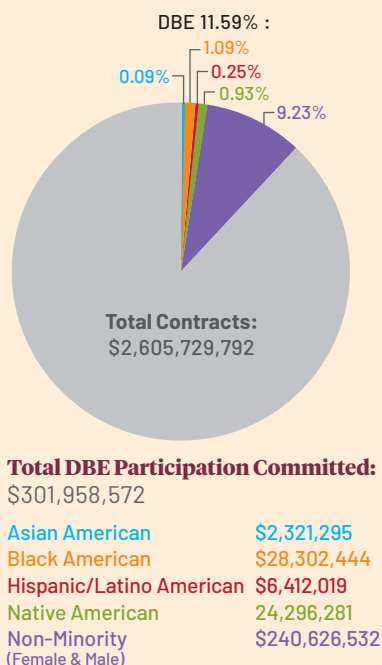


## INTRODUCTION

## What's certification all about?

### The equity pie

Here's an example of equity breakdown from the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT). The U.S. Department of Transportation's 49 C.F.R. Part 26, a federal law, requires MoDOT to set goals for fulfilling contracts with Disadvantaged Business Enterprises. The goal for Federal Fiscal Years 2018–2020 was 12.45%. Here's how MoDOT performed against that goal.



### It's about getting your piece of the pie.

Cities, states, the federal government and private corporations have established targets designed to open up opportunities beyond what some folks call “the good old boy network.”

For example, the goal of the Missouri Department of Transportation's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program is to provide opportunities to small businesses owned and operated by certain groups, including Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Native American and others. The program commits \$301,958,572 in funding to support DBEs each year and has a goal to fulfill 12.45% of its contracts with businesses in these groups. It currently falls slightly short of that goal, at 11.59%, which means there's plenty of opportunity for diverse businesses. (See graphic.)

Reaching diversity targets is where certification comes in. Frequently a company must be certified as a DBE or a minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned, LGBTQ-owned or disability-owned business in order to partake in such opportunities.

Why? Because certification proves the business is legitimate — and legitimately diverse. It's a required designation for access to certain programs. It also shows the owner is willing to do what it takes to meet certification requirements. And certification is just the beginning. As Stan Sena of the Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council says, it's a tool in your toolbox that you can leverage to grow your business, and it can be much more.

“With certification, businesses get technical assistance and training,” said Francoise (Fran) Lyles-Wiggins, assistant airport director at St. Louis Lambert International Airport and leader of the airport's Community Programs/Business Diversity Development department. “We help businesses develop relationships with prime contractors and partners across the region.”

Clearly certification can be beneficial. But is it for everyone? Not necessarily. The process of becoming certified can be a struggle, especially if your business isn't ready. “You might not qualify,” explained Brittney Joy West-Ware, former regional manager of MBE Services at the Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council. “It's hard to hear that.” To become certified, you need financial documents, an operational agreement, a capability statement, even minutes from your meetings.

Once you become certified, there's still work to do.

“Certification is not an automatic guarantee you'll get a contract,” West-Ware said. “It's a designation stating that you're a minority- or women-owned business. It won't change your life overnight.” You still need to seek out — and compete for — opportunities, too.

In the following pages, we'll share tips and tools to help you learn more about certification and decide if it's right for you.

“Whatever your trade, when you apply for certification, be prepared. Set up your company correctly and make sure everything is legit.”

—Jana Weitkemper, statewide program manager,  
Missouri Procurement Technical Assistance Center



### In the 1960s a new movement began, ushering in support for minority businesses.

Following years of civil unrest as Black people fought for the right to be equal, including the right to spend money at White-owned businesses, President Richard Nixon recognized that the opportunity for full economic participation by minorities would be essential to reach social and economic justice.

In 1969, Nixon established the Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE), which later became the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA). In 1971, Nixon signed Executive Order 11625, which increased the scope of this agency, defined a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), authorized grants to organizations to provide technical and management assistances to MBEs, and directed federal agencies to develop plans and goals for a national MBE contracting program. All of these steps helped to create capital within the Black community.

In the 1970s, Jimmy Carter, in conjunction with Congressman Parren Mitchell from Maryland, continued this effort with the creation of the program for set-asides, which are municipal contracts available only for bids from minority-owned businesses.

Throughout the 1980s, a requirement that 5% of products sold to the federal government must be from disadvantaged businesses encouraged the private sector to seek more minority-owned suppliers. The resulting demand for products and services from minority-owned businesses created room in the market for even more to follow. But just as the system was gaining traction, a 1989 Supreme Court decision determined that set-aside contracts were unconstitutional except under certain circumstances where discriminatory practices could be proven. As a result, most city and state programs became voluntary, support for federal diversity programs subsided, and the private sector took over these efforts.

The National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), which was chartered in 1972, provided a national certification process for Minority Business Enterprises (MBE) for businesses of all sizes in the private sector. This certification verified that businesses were legitimately owned and operated by minority owners.

Because of its uniform structure and consistency, the NMSDC inspired confidence in business leaders that certified suppliers were legitimate and would meet expectations.

With more minorities in leadership positions at many private companies, the NMSDC's MBE certification gained prominence coast to coast. Because of its uniform structure and consistency, the NMSDC inspired confidence in business leaders that certified suppliers were legitimate and would meet expectations. With a national office in New York and 23 regional councils, including the Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council based in Indianapolis, the NMSDC serves as a direct link between corporate America and minority-owned businesses.

## Here's what you need to know.

The certification process boils down to three key areas.

# 1

### **Understanding certification**

First, do your research so that you really understand what certification means for your business.

- Develop and hone your business strategy.
- Define your market, potential clients and customers.
- Research certification options.
  - Determine if you are eligible.
  - Determine if certification could help you – or not.

# 2

### **Becoming a certified business**

Once you've decided that certification is right for you and your business goals, follow the application process.

- Choose the certification you seek.
- Verify that you can meet the certification requirements.
- Complete checklists, attend webinars and ask for help.
- Complete and submit your certification application.

# 3

### **Putting your certification to work**

Make the most of the opportunities offered to you through top-notch business strategy, marketing and professionalism.

- Create a capabilities statement.
- Add your certification seal to your marketing materials.
- Attend networking events hosted by certifying organizations.
- Reach out to your fellow certified businesses and build connections.
- Sign up for opportunities on company and/or public websites.
- Research bid lists in the categories you're targeting.
- Professionally respond to requests for proposal.
- Deliver the goods to other contractors, clients, customers and partners.
- Create a calendar reminder for certification renewal.



**Are you ready to certify?**

We'll elaborate on each step throughout these pages. Before you go too far, consider these three questions:

**1 Should I get certified?** Really, it can be a big investment of time. Will your business benefit?

**2 Am I eligible?** Check each certifying body's definition of "minority" and "owner."

**3 Is my business ready to be certified?** You might have some work to do first.

If you can answer a resounding **YES** to these questions, you're ready to move forward.

**That's a good question.**

At a recent webinar on supplier diversity, "Should I get certified" is the question business owners asked most often. On one hand, it's a difficult question to answer, since there are so many opportunities – especially for businesses that provide services or serve as primary contractors or subcontractors.

You'll often see these types of businesses benefiting from certification:

- Construction (horizontal and vertical)
- Health care
- Professional services
- Technology
- Manufacturing

On the other hand, many businesses are less likely to benefit. "It all depends on your strategy," said Carolyn Mosby, president of the Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council. "For example, some people say caterers benefit from certification, but in my experience that's typically only true if there are opportunities with large corporations or a major event seeking to meet a diverse spend goal."

It's also true that independent entities like restaurants, clothing stores and hair salons likely wouldn't benefit.

"That's why we recommend that you do your homework," Mosby said. "Applying for certification takes time and focus, and so does the networking and promotion of your business that follow. Before you go down the road to certification, make sure it's the right road for you and your business."

For examples of situations that can benefit from certification, check out the *To certify or not to certify* chart.

## Do your homework before you take the plunge.

Requirements vary for each certifying body. Do some homework and understand the foundational requirements for ownership, operation and control. As a rule of thumb, businesses must be 51% owned, operated and controlled by qualifying minorities, veterans, women or LGBTQ people.

If you're a new business owner and you'd like to take advantage of certification programs, it's important to create your business in a way that will qualify it for these programs. Do you have legal controls? Do you have the highest officer title? Do your bylaws show you're in control of your business? If not, get your house in order before you apply. If you can't show control, you'll be denied certification.

Your citizenship, residence, ethnicity, experience and other factors such as personal worth and company size may also come into play, depending on where you seek certification. Allow time for research before you make your decision.



### 51%

Percentage of a business that must be owned, operated and controlled by qualifying minorities, veterans, women or LGBTQ to qualify for most certifications



### 60–90 days

Time frame to process most certification applications



### 1–3 years

Time frame for renewals of most certifications

**“Certification is a tool in your toolbox, and it’s a big, important tool. Use it.”**

—Stan Sena, President and CEO, Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council

## GROUNDWORK

## Is my business ready to be certified?

### Benefits of certification

- ✓ Credibility
- ✓ Access to public and private organizations and opportunities to bid for work
- ✓ Growth and networking opportunities
- ✓ Education and tools to help you succeed
- ✓ Validation of your status with a seal you can use on your website and marketing materials
- ✓ An opportunity to support other businesses like yours

### Reasons not to get certified

- ✗ You don't meet eligibility requirements
- ✗ You're not in an industry that typically contracts with entities that recognize certification or procure your goods or services
- ✗ You don't have capacity for the work or paperwork
- ✗ You're not willing to commit time to networking events and programs
- ✗ You're not willing to be flexible and modify what you do to meet the needs of those offering contracts
- ✗ Certification doesn't align with your business strategy
- ✗ You've been certified in the past and haven't taken advantage of your certified status to bid on contracts (in other words, you didn't use it)

## Consider what you do and who you work with.

The experts we consulted recommend several to-dos before you apply for certification. Most important: Reflect on your business and your goals and how they align with the opportunities you're seeking. Don't just apply for certification because someone else suggested it. Put yourself and your business goals first. "Understand your customer and if certification is going to be beneficial to you," said Carolyn Mosby of the Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council. These expert tips may help you set your priorities:

**Be strategic.** Before you apply, consider the designation you want and how you plan to use the certification you're seeking. When you become certified, you begin the process of setting yourself up to meet the needs of another company or organization. "It's more about what you do than who you are," said Luther Taylor Jr. of the Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council. "You have to meet the needs of the company you want to work with — and do it well."

**Get help.** Not sure where or how to start assessing your business? Tap into free resources. In Missouri, you have access to a wealth of advisors (see page 24 for a list). Though it's focused primarily on public certification, the Missouri Procurement Technical Center (PTAC), offers free consultations. Missourians also have access to resources like Small Business Development Centers in Kansas City and St. Louis. Certifying bodies can help, too. For example, this [questionnaire on the WBENC site](#) can help women business owners determine if certification is right for them.

**Start where you are.** Corey Bolton of the State of Missouri's Office of Equal Opportunity recommends learning local markets first, then scaling up to the state level. "Start where you are and work your way up, so when opportunities come around, you have capacity," he said. This is also true in the private sector. "It's unusual that a corporation would be somebody's first customer," said Karen Goldner of the WBENC network's Women's Business Development Center. "Build your customer base, starting with smaller customers, before you try to land a corporate contract."

**Know (and show) your strengths.** Understand your strengths and look for places to leverage them. "Certification can help you be more competitive," said Fran Lyles-Wiggins of St. Louis Lambert International Airport. "It gives others a gleam into your business and how it operates." It's a way to showcase your capabilities and your value — as well as your ability to accomplish the work you're seeking.

**Read, read, read.** "A lot of business owners get overwhelmed with certification," Goldner said. "If you take the time to read and ask questions, you'll figure things out." Certification isn't fast and easy. It takes time to assess your business and your goals. As Brittni Joy West-Ware, formerly of the Mountain Plains MSDC said: "The certification process is a marathon, not a sprint."

**Identify who buys what you sell.** Invest time and effort figuring out which customers or organizations you plan to target based on your capabilities and your business, Goldner advised. Then determine if certification will help you reach that target. "Is your business business-to-business? Business-to-consumer? Depending on where you are in the life cycle of your business, certification may — or may not — be the right fit."

### Learn the lay of the land.

When you start researching certifications and organizations that offer them, the options can seem overwhelming.

In fact, there's very little about certification that's cut and dried. There are reasons to apply for certification and reasons not to apply. Public sector certifications sometimes help businesses win private contracts and, in some cases, corporate certifications help businesses win government contracts. That said, there are two general categories of certifications: those that relate to public sector contracts and those that relate to private sector contracts. This guide offers information about the most important certifying organizations in Missouri.



#### **Private sector certifications**

If you're interested in working with corporations and private companies, certification with the right organizations can help you get a foot in the door. These nonprofits charge fees for certifications based on the size of your company. Most organizations that issue private certifications are national in scope, which can give your business broader reach.

Certifying organizations in the private sector include the Mid-States and Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Councils, the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce and the Women's Business Enterprise National Council.



#### **Public certifications**

The federal government, the state of Missouri and the cities of Kansas City, Mo., and St. Louis have a range of certifying organizations and programs that connect contractors with certified subcontractors. These organizations frequently don't charge fees for certification.

Certifying organizations in the public sector include the Small Business Administration; the Missouri Office of Equal Opportunity; the Missouri Department of Transportation; the City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department at St. Louis Lambert International Airport; and the City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department.

See the **Resources** section of this guide for detailed listings of Missouri certifying organizations.

Certifying organizations in both the private and public sector offer networking events, training and opportunities to respond to Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for the businesses they certify.



### Know who's who before you apply.

This chart shows private and public sector certifying organizations in Missouri at a glance. Many national/federal certifying organizations process certifications through regional offices. To learn more about each certifying body, click on the link. The Resources section of this guide has detailed listings that include regional office contact information, too.

### Certifying organizations at a glance

SCOPE	PRIVATE SECTOR	PUBLIC SECTOR
National/Federal	<p>Minority Supplier Development Council (<a href="#"><u>Mid-States</u></a> and <a href="#"><u>Mountain Plains</u></a>)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>National LGBT Chamber of Commerce</u></a></p> <p>Women's Business Enterprise National Council (<a href="#"><u>Women's Business Development Center—Midwest</u></a>)</p>	<p>Small Business Administration (<a href="#"><u>Kansas City District Office</u></a> and <a href="#"><u>St. Louis District Office</u></a>)</p> <p>U.S. Department of Transportation (via the <a href="#"><u>Missouri Department of Transportation</u></a>)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Small &amp; Disadvantaged Business Utilization</u></a></p>
State		<p><a href="#"><u>Missouri Department of Transportation</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Missouri Office of Equal Opportunity</u></a></p>
Local		<p><a href="#"><u>Bi-State Development</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department</u></a> at St. Louis Lambert International Airport</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Kansas City Area Transportation Authority</u></a></p>

## UNDERSTANDING CERTIFICATION

### Swimming in alphabet soup?

To keep this chart simple, we used each certification's acronym. Visit the [detailed listings](#) and our [Glossary of acronyms](#) in the [Resources](#) section of this guide to understand more about each certification.

## Certifications in Missouri

### Know your options before you get started.

Although the names of some certifications may be the same – Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) or Women's Business Enterprise (WBE), for example – many certifications are unique to the organizations that offer them and not transferable. For instance, an MBE certification from the Minority Supplier Development Council is not the same thing as an MBE certification from the Missouri Office of Equal Opportunity.

Sometimes certifications are transferable. In Missouri, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification is both offered and accepted by five different certifying organizations. Learn more in [Sharing the road](#).

This chart provides a bird's-eye view of certifications in Missouri. See the [Glossary of acronyms](#) for a description of each certification.

### Certifying organizations at a glance

#### National/Federal

Certification: **MBE**  
Issued by: [Mid-States](#) and [Mountain Plains](#)  
Minority Supplier Development Councils

Certification: **LGBTBE**  
Issued by: [National LGBT Chamber of Commerce](#)

Certification: **WBE**  
Issued by: [WBENC](#) (through the [Women's Business Development Center—Midwest](#))

#### PUBLIC SECTOR



Certifications: **7(j) Management and Technical Assistance Program, 8(a) Business Development Program, Small Disadvantaged Business, EDWOSB, HUBZone, WOSB**  
Issued by: [Small Business Administration](#)

Certification: **DBE, ACDBE**  
Issued by: [U.S. Department of Transportation](#) (via [MoDOT](#))

Certifications: **SDVOSB, VOSB**  
Issued by: [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#) and [Small Business Administration](#)

#### State of Missouri



Certifications: **DBE, ACDBE**  
Issued by: [Missouri Department of Transportation](#)

Certifications: **MBE, WBE**  
Issued by: [Missouri Office of Equal Opportunity](#)

Certification: **SDVE**  
Issued by: [Missouri Office of Administration Division of Purchasing](#)

#### Local



Certifications: **MBE, WBE, DBE, ACDE, SBE, SLBE**  
Issued by: [City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department](#)

Certifications: **MBE, WBE, DBE, ACDBE**  
Issued by: [City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department](#) at St. Louis Lambert International Airport

Certifications: **MBE, WBE, DBE**  
Issued by: [Kansas City Area Transportation Authority](#)

Certification: **DBE**  
Issued by: [Bi-State Development](#)

### Explore possibilities that fit your profile.

Review this list of certifications by eligibility to find and choose options to explore.

#### For ethnic minorities

Business owners who qualify as racial or ethnic minorities must demonstrate they are African-American/Black, Asian-Indian American, Asian-Pacific American/Asian-Islander American, Hispanic (non-European) American or Native American Indian. Certification options may seem similar but offer different benefits.



Certification:  
Issued by:



#### Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)

Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council (Mid-States MSDC)

Certification:  
Issued by:



#### Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)

Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council (Mountain Plains MSDC)



Certification:  
Issued by:

**8(a) Business Development Program/Small Disadvantaged Business**  
Small Business Administration (SBA)

Certification:  
Issued by:

**Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE)**  
City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department at St. Louis Lambert International Airport; City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department

Certification:  
Issued by:

**Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)**  
Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT); Kansas City Area Transportation Authority; City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department at St. Louis Lambert International Airport; City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department; Bi-State Development

Certification:  
Issued by:

**Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)**  
Missouri Office of Equal Opportunity

Certification:  
Issued by:

**Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)**  
City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department

Certification:  
Issued by:

**Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)**  
City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department at St. Louis Lambert International Airport

Certification:  
Issued by:

**Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)**  
Kansas City Area Transportation Authority

## UNDERSTANDING CERTIFICATION

## Which certification is right for me?

### For women

Women business owners may qualify for several types of certifications. Certification options might seem similar but offer different benefits.



Certification:

**Women's Business Enterprise (WBE)**

Issued by:

Women's Business Development Center—Midwest



Certification:

**8(a) Business/Small Disadvantaged Business**

Issued by:

Small Business Administration (SBA)

Certification:

**Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE)**

Issued by:

City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department at St. Louis Lambert International Airport; City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department

Certification:

**Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)**

Issued by:

Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT); Kansas City Area Transportation Authority; City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department at St. Louis Lambert International Airport; City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department; Bi-State Development

Certification:

**Economically Disadvantaged Women-Owned Small Business (EDWOSB)**

Issued by:

Small Business Administration (SBA)

Certification:

**Women Business Enterprise (WBE)**

Issued by:

City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department

Certification:

**Women Business Enterprise (WBE)**

Issued by:

City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department at St. Louis Lambert International Airport

Certification:

**Women Business Enterprise (WBE)**

Issued by:

Kansas City Area Transportation Authority

Certification:

**Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB)**

Issued by:

Small Business Administration (SBA)

## UNDERSTANDING CERTIFICATION

## Which certification is right for me?

Certification:  
Issued by:

Certification:  
Issued by:

Certification:  
Issued by:

### For veterans

U.S. military veteran business owners may qualify for several types of certifications. Certification options may seem similar but offer different benefits.



#### **Service-Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (SDVE)**

Missouri Office of Administration, Division of Purchasing

#### **Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB)**

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization Vets First Verification Program

#### **Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB)**

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization Vets First Verification Program

### For LGBTQ people

Business owners who identify as members of the LGBTQ community may consider this private option.



Certification:  
Issued by:

#### **LGBT Business Enterprise (LGBTBE)**

National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC)

### For specified economically depressed communities

This certification is for small businesses located in designated HUBZone areas that draw at least 35% of employees from a certified HUBZone. Unlike other certification options, businesses may be owned by a Community Development Corporation, an agricultural cooperative, a Native Hawaiian organization, a Native American tribe or any U.S. citizen.



Certification:  
Issued by:

#### **Historically Underutilized Business Zones (HUBZone)**

Small Business Administration (SBA)

## UNDERSTANDING CERTIFICATION

## Which certification is right for me?

### For small businesses

Organizations determine whether a business counts as small using factors like number of employees and the owner's personal net worth and adjusted gross income. Check requirements to be sure your business fits the bill.



Certification:	<b>8(a) Business Development Program/Small Disadvantaged Business</b>
Issued by:	<u>Small Business Administration (SBA)</u>
Certification:	<b>Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE)</b>
Issued by:	<u>City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department at St. Louis Lambert International Airport; City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department</u>
Certification:	<b>Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)</b>
Issued by:	<u>Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT); Kansas City Area Transportation Authority; City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department at St. Louis Lambert International Airport; City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department; Bi-State Development</u>
Certification:	<b>Economically Disadvantaged Women-Owned Small Business (EDWOSB)</b>
Issued by:	<u>Small Business Administration (SBA)</u>
Certification:	<b>Historically Underutilized Business Zones (HUBZone)</b>
Issued by:	<u>Small Business Administration (SBA)</u>
Certification:	<b>Small Business Enterprise (SBE)</b>
Issued by:	<u>City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department</u>
Certification:	<b>Small Business Enterprise (SBE)</b>
Issued by:	<u>Kansas City Area Transportation Authority</u>
Certification:	<b>Small Local Business Enterprise (SLBE)</b>
Issued by:	<u>City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department</u>
Certification:	<b>Small Local Business Enterprise Water Services Department Engineering Professional (SLBE-WSDEPS)</b>
Issued by:	<u>City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department</u>
Certification:	<b>Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB)</b>
Issued by:	<u>Small Business Administration (SBA)</u>



## Sharing the road.

In Missouri, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification is both offered and accepted by five different certifying organizations.

That's because Missouri, like other states, offers a **Unified Certification Program** (UCP), which allows applicants for the DBE program to apply only once for a DBE certification that will be honored by all of the recipients in the state. Missouri's UCP is the **Missouri Regional Certification Committee**.

What does this mean if you are seeking certification in the DBE program? "To put it simply, if you're certified with one, you don't have to go to the others," said Rhonetta Brazzill, supplier diversity program manager at Bi-State Development. You can build relationships and seek out opportunities at all five members of the Missouri Regional Certification Committee without having to become certified with each one. (This reciprocity is unique. It's not available with most other certifications within the state.)

Missouri's Unified Certification Program benefits DBE firms by reinforcing connections and promoting opportunities to DBEs. Collaborative workshops, opportunities to respond to Requests for Proposal (RFPs) and old-fashioned networking all come into play.

"Our UCP is active, we communicate with each other, we train together and we host workshops and outreach events," said Missy Stuedle, external civil rights director at the Missouri Department of Transportation. "All those things help build trust and create more opportunities for everyone across the state."

For example, getting to know one member of the UCP can help you build connections with the others, Stuedle said. "If I know of a bid opening at Lambert Airport, I'll let DBEs know they can reach out to my contact at Lambert."

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Missouri's strong Unified  
Certification Program helps  
create more opportunities  
for DBEs across the state.



## Meet the fab five.

The members of the Missouri Regional Certification Committee are:

### **Certifying organizations**

Bi-State Development

City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department

City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department at St. Louis Lambert International Airport

Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA)

Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT)

### **Non-certifying organizations**

East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWG) (St. Louis area)

Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) (Kansas City area)

### **What do the non-certifying organizations do?**

The non-certifying organizations in Missouri are nonprofits that provide a forum for cooperative problem-solving within their regions, and they can offer opportunities to DBEs either directly or indirectly.

The East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWG) coordinates development of policy in the St. Louis region with elected officials in Missouri and Illinois. The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) does the same thing for the Kansas City region. Funded by federal, state and private grants, local contributions and earned income, MARC passes a major portion of its budget to local governments and other agencies.

"We don't certify, but we partner with others who do," said Darryl Fields, principal planner at MARC. "We have a DBE program and post all procurement opportunities on our website." Fields said most opportunities offered by MARC are related to planning studies and work for engineering firms but not construction.

MARC also partners with other Missouri Regional Certification Committee members, especially MoDOT, KCATA and the City of Kansas City, Mo., to offer workshops and events. Fields is happy to offer one-on-one advice, too. "Don't be afraid to call," he said. "The certification process involves a lot of paperwork. To get through it, you've got to have some stick-to-itiveness. And you've got to call. We'll let you know what you need to do. Those of us who work in the DBE program really do want to help."

### Know-how for the Show-Me State.

Over the years Missouri's famous nickname has come to stand for its residents' qualities of courage, rationality and stick-to-itiveness. It also happens that, for Missouri residents seeking diverse business certification, there are many ways to say "show me" and get help — most of it free of charge.

#### KC BIZCARE

1118 Oak St., Kansas City, MO 64106

☎ 816-513-2492

✉ [kcbizcare@kcmo.org](mailto:kcbizcare@kcmo.org)

🌐 [bizcare.kcmo.gov/](http://bizcare.kcmo.gov/)

📘 [www.facebook.com/KCBizCare/](https://www.facebook.com/KCBizCare/)

🌐 [www.linkedin.com/company/kc-bizcare/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/kc-bizcare/)

KC BizCare is a free business resource and advocacy and information center for new and existing businesses operating in Kansas City, Mo. Since 2009, KC BizCare has supported thousands of entrepreneurs and micro-enterprises by providing technical assistance with business registration (state, federal, city) and licensing (city), navigating city departments for required permits and resource referrals via partners. KC BizCare offers checklists, model business plans, tips on financing, pitch competitions and more.

#### LEGAL SERVICES OF EASTERN MISSOURI

4232 Forest Park Ave., St. Louis, MO 63108

☎ 800-444-0514 or 314-534-4200

✉ [info@lsem.org](mailto:info@lsem.org)

🌐 [lsem.org/](http://lsem.org/)

📘 [www.facebook.com/LegalServicesofEasternMissouri](https://www.facebook.com/LegalServicesofEasternMissouri)

🌐 [www.linkedin.com/company/legal-services-of-eastern-missouri](https://www.linkedin.com/company/legal-services-of-eastern-missouri)

In the St. Louis area, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, with offices in Clayton, Hannibal and Union, Mo., advances justice through legal representation, education and supportive services. Through its Community Economic Development—Microenterprise Program, Legal Services of Missouri provides free civil legal assistance to eligible entrepreneurs and small businesses.

#### MID-AMERICA REGIONAL COUNCIL (MARC)

600 Broadway Blvd., Suite 200, Kansas City, MO 64105

Contact: Darryl E. Fields, principal planner,  
[dfields@marc.org](mailto:dfields@marc.org)

☎ 816-474-4240

✉ [marcinfo@marc.org](mailto:marcinfo@marc.org)

🌐 [www.marc.org](http://www.marc.org)

📘 [www.facebook.com/MARCKCMetro](https://www.facebook.com/MARCKCMetro)

🌐 [www.linkedin.com/company/mid-america-regional-council/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/mid-america-regional-council/)

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) is an association of city and county governments and the metropolitan planning organization for the bistate Kansas City region. As a member of Missouri's Unified Certification Program, MARC's Darryl Fields, a principal planner who manages MARC's DBE and Title 6 programs, works with the City of Kansas City, Mo., to support diverse business certification.

"We don't certify, but we partner with others who do," said Fields. "Much of what we do overlaps with other organizations — KCATA and the city of KCMO. It works out best when we can pool our resources to offer workshops and other opportunities."


MARC posts Requests for Proposals (RFPs) on its website, opportunities typically related to planning studies, engineering firms and public involvement firms, Fields said. "Not construction."

Fields, a MARC veteran of more than two decades, also offers advice. "If you're working on your certification, don't be afraid to call and ask questions," he said. "Everyone in the program wants to help. We'll let you know what you need to do."

### MISSOURI PROCUREMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER (PTAC)

W1003G Lafferre Hall, University of Missouri—Extension,  
Columbia, MO 65211

**Contact:** Jana Weitkemper, statewide program manager,  
573-882-3648, [weitkemperj@missouri.edu](mailto:weitkemperj@missouri.edu)

 573-882-8058

 [www.moptac.net](http://www.moptac.net)

 [www.facebook.com/MissouriPTAC/](https://www.facebook.com/MissouriPTAC/)

 [www.linkedin.com/company/missouri-ptac/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/missouri-ptac/)

Every public sector certifying organization interviewed for this guide mentioned Missouri Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC) as a helpful resource. “We’re one of Missouri’s best kept secrets,” said Jana Weitkemper, Missouri PTAC’s statewide program manager. Through a network of counselors across the state, PTAC helps businesses — including small, disadvantaged and women-owned firms — obtain federal, state and local government contracts. All of PTAC’s services are free of charge.

Funded by the Department of Defense and the University of Missouri, PTAC can help businesses navigate the certification process and beyond. “We help businesses with any federal, state or local certification they may be eligible for,” Weitkemper said. “We’ll review the application prior to submission and assist the client throughout the entire process.” PTAC counselors also assist with **SAM registration**, which is free.

When it’s time to bid for contracts, PTAC counselors can help a company see where it stands in terms of the competition, Weitkemper said. “When it’s time to bid, we assist with solicitation reviews, understanding clauses, regulations as well as assisting with the prime contractor’s subcontracting agreements, if needed.” If a business is not the awardee, PTAC counselors can facilitate debriefing requests — more free support and education.

PTAC also offers workshops, training and ongoing education at no cost to its clients, a bid-matching service and leads via a daily email. “The leads that are generated via our bid matching service are a huge timesaver,” Weitkemper said.

Find PTAC staff at a center near you or view the [PTAC Centers county coverage map](#) (PDF). The PTAC team responds quickly to messages on its [Facebook page](#).

### MISSOURI SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

 [sbdc.missouri.edu/about/who-we-are](http://sbdc.missouri.edu/about/who-we-are)

Missouri Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) help businesses in every stage of development — from concept to startup, growth to renewal, mature to succession. Missouri SBDC experts located across the state offer Missouri businesses guidance and confidential one-on-one counseling in management, marketing, strategic planning and more. SBDCs are supported by a collaboration of the federal Small Business Administration, state and local governments and private sector resources.

“SBDCs are truly a great resource,” said Gary Alexander, business opportunity specialist for the SBA’s St. Louis district office. “There are regular classes that help small businesses grow and cover topics like profit and loss statements, balance sheets, cash flow and more.”

Three of the most robust SBDC locations in Missouri are in [Kansas City](#), [St. Louis](#) and at the [University of Missouri](#).

### SERVICE CORPS OF RETIRED EXECUTIVES (SCORE) ASSOCIATION

1165 Herndon Parkway, Suite 100, Herndon, VA 20170

☎ 800-634-0245

🌐 [www.score.org/](http://www.score.org/)

📘 [www.facebook.com/SCOREmentors](https://www.facebook.com/SCOREmentors)

🌐 [www.linkedin.com/company/score-mentors/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/score-mentors/)

Gary Alexander of the Small Business Administration's St. Louis District Office highly recommends SCORE, the largest network of free volunteer small business mentors in the nation. Supported by the SBA and a network of 10,000+ volunteers, SCORE provides services at no charge or at very low cost. "Some mentors are retired, some are not," Alexander said. "They all volunteer their time to help small businesses grow."

SCORE mentors share their expertise across 62 industries, providing free, confidential business counseling in person or via email, as well as free business tools, templates and tips. SCORE also offers inexpensive or free business workshops (locally) and webinars (online 24/7) and matches entrepreneurs with local volunteer mentors. Search by ZIP code to [find a mentor](#).

"If you're just thinking about starting a business, sit down with a SCORE rep," Alexander advised. "They will challenge you. Is there a need for your business? Have you researched your market? SCORE has access to resources we don't, like LexisNexis search engines."

### URBAN LEAGUE OF METROPOLITAN ST. LOUIS WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER

6722 Page Ave., St. Louis, MO 63133

☎ 314-584-6700

✉ [wbcinfo@urbanleague-stl.org](mailto:wbcinfo@urbanleague-stl.org)

🌐 [www.ulstlwbc.com/](http://www.ulstlwbc.com/)

📘 [www.facebook.com/UrbanLeagueSTLWBC](https://www.facebook.com/UrbanLeagueSTLWBC)

🌐 [www.linkedin.com/company/urbanleaguestlwbc/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/urbanleaguestlwbc/)

The mission of the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis Women's Business Center (formerly Grace Hill) is to reach beyond circumstances and uplift communities by empowering, engaging and advocating for small business owners in the greater St. Louis area. Business owners get connected to tools, resources and partners committed to quality in every aspect of business development. The center supports entrepreneurs on their journey to become self-sustaining and successful contributors to their communities, offering one-on-one business counseling, online workshops and classes and a small business development program.

### VETBIZ RESOURCE CENTER

611 N. 10th St., Suite 350, St. Louis, MO 63101

☎ 314-531-8387

✉ [info@vetbiz.com](mailto:info@vetbiz.com)

🌐 [vetbiz.com/](http://vetbiz.com/)

📘 [www.facebook.com/VetBiz/](https://www.facebook.com/VetBiz/)

🌐 [www.linkedin.com/company/vetbiz1/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/vetbiz1/)

Headquartered in St. Louis, VetBiz, which operates the Veterans Business Resource Center, helps veterans transition military skills into small business success through education, one-on-one consulting and mentoring. VetBiz focuses on Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska and Southern Illinois. "VetBiz President [Darcella Craven](#) is one of the best advocates for veterans in the country," said Gary Alexander of the SBA's St. Louis District. "She even received an award at the White House." Learn more about Craven and VetBiz in "A voice for veterans" in the resources section.

### These story problems could help you decide.

Not sure how certification could benefit you and your business? Consider these examples, which help illustrate different types of certification.



#### Business owner example

Angel is a Black woman operating a home-based makeup business selling directly to consumers in Kansas City. She would like to build her client base so she can increase her monthly income.

#### Should they certify?

**MAYBE.** Direct-to-consumer businesses like Mary Kay, Avon and Tupperware typically wouldn't benefit from certifications. But Angel might consider certification with Mountain Plains MSDC or Women's Business Development Center—Midwest if she wants to supply her product to retailers like Target or Walmart.



Maurice is a Black owner of a fine dining restaurant in downtown St. Louis. He would like to encourage more diners to visit his restaurant during dinner hours.

**NO.** A restaurant like Maurice's would not benefit from certification. However, if Maurice offered a service such as catering, it could.



Sandra is a female veteran who was disabled in the line of duty. Her Jefferson City-based communications company, which provides writing and editing services throughout the state, is small, but her staff is capable and eager to take on more business.

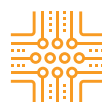
**YES.** Sandra could consider multiple certifications. Here are two of her options: As a service-disabled veteran, she could apply for the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) certification, which would allow her business to gain access to federal contracts.

As a female business owner, she could apply for a Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) certification offered by a metropolitan area where she'd like to expand, like the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority or the City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department at St. Louis Lambert International Airport.



Abigail is a White woman owner of a business creating grab-and-go sandwiches. She has two locations and has identified the Kansas City International Airport as a potential third location.

**YES.** The Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE) certification would identify her woman-owned business as socially or economically disadvantaged, which would be helpful. Because ACDBE certification is reciprocal through Missouri's Unified Certification Program, if Abigail also wanted to expand into St. Louis Lambert Airport, she wouldn't need to seek an additional certification, as long as her business continued to meet the requirements.



Victor is a Hispanic man whose specialized data network installation business has been growing. He would like more opportunities to bid on contracts with larger firms in the St. Louis area.

**YES.** Large corporations often have programs that would benefit certified businesses. Being certified as a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) through the Mid-States MSDC could set Victor's business apart from other bidders and help him become a supplier to private companies.

## UNDERSTANDING CERTIFICATION

## To certify or not to certify?



### Business owner example

Minh is an Asian man whose company specializes in poured concrete for foundations and structures. He would like to branch into road construction throughout Missouri.

### Should they certify?

**YES.** The Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification would identify his business as socially or economically disadvantaged during his bid. See how Minh could benefit from [Missouri's Unified Certification Program](#).



Max is a Black man with a line of authentic Kansas City barbecue sauces and rubs. He would like more Kansas City gift shops to carry his product line.

**MAYBE.** Although small local gift shops are unlikely to have supplier diversity programs, national stores like Walmart and Target often do. A Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) certification offered through the Mountain Plains MSDC could help get Max's products into these stores.



Sam is a Native American man who owns a screen printing studio in Columbia, Mo., creating custom printed items. He would like to work with the University of Missouri.

**YES.** A Minority Business Enterprise certification, like the one offered through the Missouri Office of Equal Opportunity, could get Sam's studio noticed. Large universities often have diversity programs to promote fairness to socially or economically disadvantaged business suppliers.



Lynne is a Black woman who has a small business selling handmade greeting cards. She would like to sell her cards to incarcerated people who can use them to keep in touch with loved ones.

**YES.** Either the MBE or the WBE (Women's Business Enterprise) certification from the Missouri Office of Equal Opportunity would benefit her in her goal to be a supplier to the Missouri Department of Corrections.



John is a Black man with more than 20 years of experience as a carpenter. He's just begun his own business and wants to bid on contracts. For now, he will do all of the work himself, but he hopes to hire additional workers within three years.

**MAYBE.** Although John has the experience, his business might not have the capacity to complete bids on his own. If John is open to working with a prime contractor, certification may be helpful. Larger government contracts often require the use of subcontractors, specifically small businesses. John also could partner with another MBE-certified carpenter to boost capacity.



Litzy is a Hispanic photographer who is transitioning from weddings to do more commercial photography, including executive headshots and office interiors. She wants to connect with more business opportunities in St. Louis.

**YES.** Many businesses hire skilled photographers for both print and digital publications, though certification is unlikely to increase Litzy's wedding clientele. With a Minority Business Enterprise certification offered through the Mid-States MSDC, she may increase her visibility in her desired market.



Eileen is a White woman who sells gift boxes of artisan-decorated cookies for holidays and special occasions. So far, her products have sold well to consumers, but she'd like to increase sales to corporations.

**YES.** A Women Business Enterprise certification offered through the Women's Business Development Center—Midwest could attract new corporations eager for innovative products.



## BECOMING A CERTIFIED BUSINESS



### Twice as nice

If you fit into more than one certification category — if you're a Black woman business owner, for example — you could be certified as both a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) and a Women's Business Enterprise (WBE).

Fitting into multiple categories can open doors. The National LGBT Chamber of Commerce offers unique opportunities through its Communities of Color Initiative, for example.

Once you're certified, you may need to choose your lane and pick on category when you bid for projects. Sometimes buyers look for a business that's both an MBE and WBE. Other times you can't be counted twice. Even so, if your business can pick from multiple categories, you might find more opportunities.

## Application tips

If you've decided certification is right for you, here are the next steps to prepare your business for new opportunities.

Once you make the decision to certify, understanding the certification process — well in advance of your application — is the next step on your to-do list. In addition to the overviews in this handbook, you'll find helpful resources, orientations, webinars and business consultations, as well as downloadable checklists, on the websites of the organizations listed in this guide.

**Read, read, read.** "Certification is not quick, fast and easy," said Karen Goldner of the Women's Business Development Center—Midwest. "If you take time to read, you can figure things out, but if you rush the process, you're likely to make mistakes." Bottom line: Certification takes time.

**Get help.** It's no surprise that the Show-Me State offers free help from organizations across the state — from KC's Plaza to the St. Louis Arch. If you're focused on public sector certifications, the Missouri Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) can help you navigate the government marketplace. There's KC Bizcare and VetBiz and Small Business Development Centers in the St. Louis area. See our list of [helpful organizations](#).

**Build brick by brick.** Instead of seeing the certification process as a wall you may never finish building, break it down into steps, said Brittney Joy West-Ware, formerly of the Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council. "You're starting from the same place as every other business out there, taking the same steps," she said. "In that sense, certification helps you with business development. It prepares you for the real world and what you'll face when you're applying for RFPs."

**Complete checklists.** Most certifying organizations offer checklists on their websites. Use them before you start filling out an application, so you know what you're getting into. "Make sure you have your financials in order: income statements, balance sheets and cash flows," said Luther Taylor Jr. of the Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council. "Do some research and give yourself time to prepare."

**Put your best foot forward.** Think of the certification application and review process the same way you'd think of applying for a job. Your certification application should show how qualified, capable and determined you are. The more polished and complete your application, the more polished and ready for business you'll be to the certifying organization to which you're applying.

**Take one step at a time.** If you plan to apply for certification at more than one organization, you'll likely be able to use a lot of the same materials. But keep in mind that, aside from DBE certification, each certifying organization and process is different. You may want to apply for one certification at a time.



## PUTTING YOUR CERTIFICATION TO WORK



## Leveraging the status and seal

The most important thing about certification is what you do after you achieve it.

Certification gives you access to opportunity but, to truly benefit, you need to use it. Here's some expert advice on how to put your certification to work.

**Set short- and long-term goals.** Certification is a first step, said Sabrina Gill Kent of the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce. It won't work for you if you're just a number in a database. In your first year, focus on learning and cultivating relationships as your goals. Attend networking events, even if they're virtual, so you can meet other certified business owners as well as prime contractors.

**Update your elevator speech.** Clearly articulate your strengths and value proposition in a capability statement, advised Brittni West-Ware, formerly of the Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council. Then practice telling your story so you can sell your business without even thinking about it.

**Act like a president.** When you're working with major corporations — whether you're a plumber or you own a construction business — you need to present yourself with a title that fits your audience. Promote yourself from "owner" to "president."

**Be the brand.** Wear your branded gear and have your marketing materials at the ready. Be sure to include seals from certifying organizations on your brochures and indicate that you're an MBE or WBE on your business card.

**Partner with your peers.** Once you get acquainted with your fellow MBEs, WBEs and DBEs, the connections you build could lead to opportunities to work together and go after larger contracts. As your business grows, certifying organizations can help with capacity-building, matchmaking and mentoring, so stay in touch.

**Start local, then scale up.** Learn the bidding process and what leveraging certification looks like in your city or county or in other local programs, advised Corey Bolton of Missouri's Office of Equal Opportunity. Start local and work your way up so that, when opportunities for larger contracts come around, you'll be ready.

**Sign up on websites.** Companies publicize diversity initiatives hoping to build goodwill in the community, said Luther Taylor Jr. of the Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council. If a corporation interests you, visit the "supplier diversity" section of the company's website and sign up as a vendor. The same is true of the public sector. If you register as an interested party on St. Louis Lambert Airport's website, for example, you'll receive information about contracts that come up for bid.

"Go out and network. You never know who you'll meet. Don't be afraid to pitch your business and connect with other businesses you may want to partner with to grow your capacity."

— Gary Alexander, business opportunity specialist,  
Small Business Administration, St. Louis District Office

## PUTTING YOUR CERTIFICATION TO WORK



### Love your (certified) neighbors.

Partnering with other MBEs is a great way to build relationships — and capacity, said Brittney Joy West-Ware, formerly of the Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council. For example, an MBE hosting an event in Kansas City could have it catered by another MBE: Gates Bar-B-Q. “Gates is one of the oldest barbecue restaurants owned by a Black person in the country,” West-Ware said. “And they’re certified through our organization. We’d be happy to connect you.”

## Leveraging the status and seal

**Read the fine print on contracts.** Before you sign contracts, make sure you understand them — as well as processes such as change orders and reporting, said Andrea Dorch, director of the Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department for the City of Kansas City. You may know engineering, but the city government is a different beast than private industry. If you don’t follow contract requirements to a T, it could hurt your business. You could even lose money.

**Be responsive.** Many businesses do a great job when it’s time to use their craft and get work done, but they may not have the personnel of larger firms to respond to customers quickly. For a certified business, that’s not OK. Responsiveness is a must-have.

**Get help when you need it.** Organizations like Missouri’s Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) were created to help businesses seeking government contracts be successful. PTAC advisors are up to date on legislation, regulations, slowdowns and other issues. Before you sign on a dotted line, get help. It’s free! See [helpful organizations](#) for more.

**Deliver the goods.** The quality of your performance, especially in the contracting world, can make or break you. Word of mouth in the contractor community can determine the path your company takes — upward or downward. You need to be ready, willing and able to perform on a contract if someone solicits a bid, said MoDOT’s Missy Stuedle. It could be a problem if you don’t have equipment or capacity to get the job done.

**Schedule time to renew.** All certifications require updates and renewals. Mark your calendar well ahead of your renewal date to ensure you have time to renew your certification before it expires.



## Certification with the right organizations can help you get a foot in the door.

Interested in working with corporations and private companies? These nonprofits charge fees for certifications based on the size of your company. Most certifying organizations have regional affiliates and are national in scope, which can give your business broader reach.

### National Minority Supplier Development Council



#### Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council

[www.mpmsdc.org/application/](http://www.mpmsdc.org/application/)

**CERTIFICATION:** Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)

**VALID FOR:** 1 year

**Cost for certification:** \$525—\$1,150 based on gross annual sales

**Processing time:** 45–60 days



#### Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council

[midstatesmsdc.org/new-certification-and-recertification/](http://midstatesmsdc.org/new-certification-and-recertification/)

**CERTIFICATION:** Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)

**VALID FOR:** 1 year

**Cost for certification:** \$450—\$1,050 based on gross annual sales

**Processing time:** 60 days; may be expedited for a fee

**The National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC)** was chartered in 1972 to provide a national certification process for Minority Business Enterprises (MBE), available to businesses of all sizes in the private sector. With a national office in New York and 23 regional councils, the NMSDC is a direct link between corporate America and minority-owned businesses. Its key function is to connect large corporations, which are members, with MBEs at both the local and national levels.

In Missouri, the NMSDC has two regional affiliates: the Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council, covering eastern Missouri, and the Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council, covering western Missouri.

“Certification is the same under our NMSDC umbrella, but the types of programs are different for each council,” said Carolyn Mosby, CEO of the Mid-States MSDC.

For its MBE certification, the NMSDC focuses on ethnicity — not gender, disability or veteran status — and expects applicants to demonstrate their ethnic minority status through official documentation such as birth certificates. To qualify for certification, a business must be 51% owned, managed, controlled and governed by an African-American/Black, Hispanic American, Native American, Asian-Pacific Islander American or Asian-Indian American individual(s).

“If you want to work for Fortune 500 companies as well as their supply chain, our certification will work for you. We can help you strategize and build connections.”

— Luther Taylor Jr., director, MBE Services  
Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council



Another key difference from other certifications: “We have no limitations on size or net worth,” said Stan Sena, president and CEO of the Mountain Plains MSDC. “We focus only on the fact that businesses are minority owned, managed and controlled.”

Before you pursue certification, take time to learn what certification is all about, advised Brittney Joy West-Ware, former regional manager of MBE services for Mountain Plains MSDC. “Make sure you’re corporate-ready,” she said. “Even if you’re a sole proprietor, you’ll need an operational agreement, basic financial documents, including projected profit-and-loss statements, and minutes from your meetings.”

Once you’re certified, stay active in your local business community. “As an MBE, you play the most important role in your growth,” West-Ware said. “Being able to sell yourself is probably the most important aspect of all of this. Love your business. Sell it because you believe in it.”

### About the Mid-States MSDC

Certification is focused on private businesses and local corporations, but it’s bigger than that, said the Mid-States MSDC’s Director of MBE Services Luther Taylor Jr. “Our ‘Mid-States’ name reflects our territory and your principal business, but certification makes you eligible for opportunities nationwide.”

The MSDC certification process is strict, Taylor said, and each company’s information is kept private. Application is online only, and the Mid-States MSDC’s website features plentiful resources and frequent **webinars** to help you understand how certification works.

At the Mid-States MSDC, corporate members like Explore St. Louis (St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission) pay annual membership fees for access to MBEs that can help them reach their goals. “We’ve been around a long time and have a wide range of acceptance,” Taylor said. “Local corporations tend to know who we are and what we offer.” Those connections extend to certified MBEs in eastern Missouri.

Programs at the Mid-States MSDC include a procurement conference, networking events and Accelerate 100+ (A100+), a 12-month program designed to increase economic access for diverse businesses by providing the tools and processes to grow and scale existing businesses and create new ones, with a focus on young entrepreneurs.

### About the Mountain Plains MSDC

Like other MSDC affiliates, corporate members at the Mountain Plains MSDC have a business-to-business focus. “Certification isn’t necessarily advantageous to retailers or specific trades,” West-Ware said. “We don’t certify joint ventures and discourage startups from applying for certification too soon.” Attend a pre-certification **workshop** to get the full scoop.

If you do achieve certification, you’ll have access to perks including support from mentors like West-Ware, who often meets with minority business owners one on one, and hosts webinars and networking events to give them the exposure they deserve. “I’m our MBEs’ biggest advocate,” she said.

Programs at the Mountain plains MSDC include a business opportunity exchange; MBE University, a certificate program with university-level business classes; workshops on how to target and win government contracts; opportunities to interact with banking and loan organizations; and a chance to connect with other MBEs. “Minority communities have always worked together,” West-Ware said. “Certification builds on that.”



**National LGBT Chamber of Commerce**  
[www.nglcc.org/get-certified](http://www.nglcc.org/get-certified)

#### CERTIFICATION:

#### VALID FOR:

Certified LGBT Business Enterprise (LGBTBE)

2 years

Cost for certification: \$400 (certification) or \$200 (recertification). Join your local affiliate chamber and the certification fee is waived.

Processing time: 60–90 days

The LGBT Business Enterprise certification is administered by the NGLCC as part of their Supplier Diversity Initiative (SDI) to help LGBTQ businesses grow. NGLCC connects LGBTQ-owned businesses with corporations that want to do business with LGBTQ suppliers. Certified suppliers also benefit from educational and scholarship programs, webinars, pitch opportunities, mentoring and leadership training.

“We’re creating opportunity and a seat at the table,” said Sabrina Kent, NGLCC’s executive vice president of programs and external affairs. “It’s recognition among corporations that you can be and should be qualified to bid in the procurement process, where you might not have otherwise had the opportunity to even get your foot in the door as an LGBTQ-owned business.”

The Certified LGBTBE database is where NGLCC Corporate Partners search for LGBTQ-owned suppliers. As a certified business owner, you’ll have access to corporate representative and supplier diversity contacts, with whom you can build relationships.

While businesses are certified nationally, you also get exposure to your local market. By joining a local NGLCC affiliate chapter, you’ll not only avoid a certification fee, but you also can network with local LGBTQ and allied business owners, access local programming and take advantage of local opportunities. The two Missouri NGLCC affiliates are the **Mid-America LGBT Chamber of Commerce** in Kansas City and the **St. Louis LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce**.

“Our affiliates are amazing, local, member-based organizations that we have reciprocal relationships with,” Kent said. “Those relationships benefit the certified businesses that tap into them. You might meet someone at an event who likes your shoes. Building your relationship with that person could lead to a corporate contract. I’ve seen it happen.”

To be certified, your business must be at least 51% owned, operated, managed and controlled by an LGBTQ person, be independent from any non-LGBTQ business, be headquartered in the United States and be recognized as a legal entity. Read about eligibility on the **NGLCC’s FAQ page**.

Getting certified is the first step through the door into a world of opportunities. Even after certification, you must understand your value proposition and know how to articulate it so others know the value of what you provide and what sets you apart from your competition.

“Certification is the diverse business owner’s best-kept secret,” Kent said. “It’s a powerful tool for you and your company.”



### Women's Business Development Center—Midwest

Regional affiliate of the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)

[wbdc.org/certification-services/](http://wbdc.org/certification-services/)

#### CERTIFICATION:

Women's Business Enterprise (WBE)

#### VALID FOR:

1 year

Cost for certification: \$350-\$1,250 based on revenue. Scholarships are available to first-time applicants to cover half the cost.

Processing time: 90 days

If your business is at least 51% owned, operated and controlled by a woman, it is eligible for certification as a Women's Business Enterprise through WBENC.

Because WBE certification is one of the most widely recognized and respected certifications in the United States, it comes with myriad **benefits** for the growth and success of your business. WBEs get access to supplier diversity and procurement executives at hundreds of corporations, opportunities for business deals with **National Corporate & Government Members** and other WBEs and benefit from mentoring, capacity development and educational programs, many virtual.

When considering whether certification is right for you, you must consider your customer, said Karen Goldner, managing director of the Women's Business Development Center—Midwest. Certification essentially is a marketing tool.

"Think about, who is your market? Who are you selling to now, and who will you be selling to in the next one to three years?" she said. "And then, when you have your list of markets, what are the certifications that matter in those markets? Even more than the industry, it's the market that determines whether certification makes sense for you."

Be mindful of your ability to sell to larger organizations. "For our certification to work for you, you need to be in a position where you have the capacity to deliver on large corporate contracts," Goldner said. "If you're not ready, delay certification for a bit and start with smaller customers. Certifying too early could lead to frustration."

To aid your decision, you can join WBDC's "Is Certification Right for You?" workshop; the **events calendar** lists dates. You also can submit questions to [certification@wbdc.org](mailto:certification@wbdc.org) or call 312-853-3477, ext. 100, to speak to a certification specialist.

Because the **certification process** is robust, the WBDC offers resources to guide you. Review the **FAQ page**, watch **informational webinars** and check out **pro tips** for completing your application.

**"Whether your business is large or small, you need to know the financial health of your organization and your capacity to deliver."**

—Karen Goldner, managing director, Women's Business Development Center—Midwest





## If you want to work for the city, state or Uncle Sam, certification gets you in front of the right people.

The federal government, state of Missouri and cities of Kansas City and St. Louis offer a range of certifications and programs that connect contractors with certified subcontractors. Because public organizations are funded by taxpayer dollars, public sector certifications are offered free of charge. We listened to experts at several public sector organizations in Missouri. Here's what we learned about their programs.



### Bi-State Development

[www.bistatedev.org/vendor-resources/supplier-diversity/dbe-certification/](http://www.bistatedev.org/vendor-resources/supplier-diversity/dbe-certification/)

#### CERTIFICATION:

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)

#### VALID FOR:

1 year

Cost for certification: Free

Processing time: 90 days

DBE certification is reciprocal as part of Missouri's Unified Certification Program (UCP).

Since President Harry Truman signed a compact between Missouri and Illinois into law in 1950, Bi-State Development (BSD) has been a leading economic force in the region. BSD is responsible for public and private development projects including construction of the Gateway Arch and its elevator trams, the St. Louis regional transit system, the Arts in Transit program and the St. Louis Metropolitan Sewer District.

Bi-State Development also offers a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification. As part of Missouri's Unified Certification Program, Bi-State Development's DBE certification has reciprocity with other certifying organizations across the state. But what really sets Bi-State apart is its ability to offer opportunities in two states.

"We have a unique situation at Bi-State," said Rhonetta Brazzill, supplier diversity program manager. "We operate on both sides of the river – on both the Missouri and the Illinois side. We also have facilities in both Missouri and Illinois. That means any time we undertake projects in Illinois, we can use vendors who are certified through our Missouri UCP. That broadens the pool of applicants who can participate on projects."

To certify as a DBE, your business must meet the same federal requirements as other organizations that offer DBEs. To be eligible for a Small Business Enterprise certification (SBE, here a component of Bi-State's DBE program), 51% of the business must be owned by one or more economically disadvantaged individuals (personal net worth must not exceed \$1.32 million) and meet the U.S. Small Business Administration [size standards](#). Bi-State Development provides resources for DBEs and other small businesses on their [website](#).

Bi-State Development's application process is digital and you can manage compliance reporting and contractor-to-subcontractor communication through Bi-State, too. Learn more about existing diverse vendors, browse contract opportunities and attend live training for prospective applicants through Bi-State's [DBE Supplier Diversity System portal](#).

Start your application by reviewing the DBE application checklist, which includes 20 items that need to be submitted, Brazzill said. "Often applicants turn in the application without supporting documentation, which slows the process." Brazzill welcomes you to schedule a one-on-one meeting before submitting. "I'm for anything to speed the process along," she said.





### City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department

[www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/human-relations/](http://www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/human-relations/)

#### CERTIFICATIONS:

#### VALID FOR:

Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE)	1 year
Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)	1 year
Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)	1 year
Small Business Enterprise (SBE)	1 year
Small Local Business Enterprise (SLBE)	1 year
Women Business Enterprise (WBE)	1 year

Cost for certification: Free

Processing time: 90–120 days

DBE, ACDBE and SBE certifications are reciprocal with other agencies, including the Missouri Unified Certification Program (UCP). There is no end date for certifications, but each certification is subject to an annual update.

Kansas City, Mo., is growing, said Andrea Dorch, director of the Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department for the City of Kansas City. "It has been phenomenal to see how our city's growth has benefited corporate citizens. Our goal is to build on that growth by promoting equal opportunity programs with a focus on equity and inclusion and minority business development. We're also bringing Kansas City into the 21st century."

A recent study showed there are still disparities between the marketplace and the workplace. Dorch hopes to change that. "We see our minority business enterprise program as a way to remedy past discriminatory effects," Dorch said. "We want to be an active participant in economic unity."

Through Missouri's Unified Certification Program, CREO offers reciprocal DBE certification and small business certification and other programs, including interactive certification **workshops**. The contract compliance division monitors how well certified businesses are performing.

"We're trying to streamline certification so it's not so onerous," said Dorch, who hopes her office will one day complete certifications within 20 business days. "I know that's a lofty goal." Making the certification renewal process easier is one way CREO is moving applications through the system more quickly.

If you're seeking government contracts in Kansas City, Mo., and considering certification, you could start by comparing your specialization to those listed in **annual reports** available on CREO's website. Once you've determined your business is a good fit, get ready for some paperwork.

"The whole point of diverse business certification is to be counted," Dorch said. "Government is a bureaucracy, and we're huge on paperwork and reports." Certification paperwork begins well before you sit down to fill out the online application. Dorch recommends using this **checklist** as a tool to get your documentation in order. Once you've gathered everything you need, set aside time to complete the application all at once. A complete application is key to a speedy certification.

Seek help well before you submit your certification application. Dorch recommends **KC BizCare** and the chambers of commerce appropriate to your business's minority status. Contact CREO, too. "It's our job to help you get through the process," Dorch said.

Businesses applying for MWDBE certification through CREO must meet **standard criteria**, beginning with 51% ownership by a female or minority with a personal net worth not exceeding \$1.32 million. The business' principal site must have been in operation within the seven-county Greater Kansas City Metropolitan Statistical Area (KCMSA), which includes Cass, Clay, Johnson, Jackson, Platte, Wyandotte and Leavenworth counties, for at least six months before application and must have transacted in the KCMSA more than once within the last three years.



### Kansas City Area Transit Authority

[kcata.diversitycompliance.com/](http://kcata.diversitycompliance.com/)

#### CERTIFICATION:

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)  
 Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)  
 Small Business Enterprise (SBE)  
 Women Business Enterprise (WBE)

#### VALID FOR:

1 year  
 1 year  
 1 year  
 1 year

Cost for certification: Free

*Note: There is no end date for certifications, but each certification is subject to an annual update.*

Processing time: 45–90 days

The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) is the regional transit authority for the Kansas City metropolitan area. KCATA operates buses, paratransit and bus rapid transit (MAX) services in the seven-county bistate area, as well as integrating with downtown streetcar services. The RideKC brand, nested under KCATA, also manages services operated by multimodal mobility providers such as taxis, scooters and microtransit.

With such a broad reach, KCATA offers a plethora of opportunities for certified businesses. “We procure everything from pens to buses,” said KCATA DBE Officer Whitney Morgan. “Don’t assume you can’t find work with us.” KCATA also accepts unsolicited proposals for supplies and services that certified business owners think KCATA might need – another way to secure bids.

Along with St. Louis Lambert Airport and the City of Kansas City, Mo., KCATA offers MBE/WBE and DBE/SBE certification. KCATA has an overall DBE participation goal of 23.3% for federal financial years 2021–2023. To qualify for MBE, WBE and DBE certifications through KCATA, your business’ majority stockholder must be considered socially and economically advantaged (including women and recognized minority groups) per U.S. Department of Transportation [guidelines](#). The disadvantaged owner must be able to prove their net worth doesn’t exceed \$1.32 million (excluding equity in the firm). Businesses seeking the SBE certification may not exceed the SBA’s [size standards for annual receipts](#). Also, businesses that are 51% owned and controlled by a woman who also is a racial or ethnic minority can qualify for classification as both a minority and women business enterprise (M/WBE).

It’s extremely important to gather all of your business documentation before starting the certification process, Morgan said. “Communication is key,” he said. “If you get stuck or have questions, just reach out.”

“We procure everything from pens to buses. Don’t assume you can’t find work with us.”

—Whitney Morgan, DBE officer/grants specialist,  
 Kansas City Area Transit Authority (KCATA)

KCATA is committed to helping DBEs not only to gain certification but to thrive in the marketplace. KCATA holds quarterly workshops dedicated to small businesses, covering subjects such as how to bid and win, federal regulations and fundamentals like prompt payment clauses, among other programs.



## The art of inclusion.

In the public sector, the topic of diverse business enterprises often focuses on construction. But in truth the landscape of what's possible is much broader.

"It's true that we focus on construction and professional services, but we don't want to leave artists out of the discussion," said Andrea Dorch, director of the City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department. "Creatives and artists are businesspeople, too."

Case in point is the city of Kansas City, Missouri's, One Percent for Art program, administered by the General Services Department, which works closely with the Municipal Art Commission. Today there are hundreds of public art programs located throughout the United States, managed by federal, state, county and city governments and by public transit agencies and aviation authorities. Most public art programs are legally mandated. Often, the funding comes from .5% to 3% of construction project budgets set aside specifically for art.

In the Kansas City International (KCI) new single terminal and parking project, diversity has been a big part of the public

art procurement process. "We drew upon a diverse and inclusive group of approximately 56 selection panelists, the largest group of panelists ever assembled in the 35-year history of the One Percent for Art program," said James Martin, public art administrator for the Facilities & Architecture Division in the City of Kansas City, Mo.

The result? Seventy-five percent of the artists whose work was selected for KCI, 21 of 28 people, are either female or artists of color. Although artists selected for KCI were not evaluated for Minority Business Enterprise or Women's Business Enterprise

certification, the Municipal Art Commission ensured that the KCI art procurement process included diversity, equity and inclusion as one of five selection criteria for artists, Martin said.



"Necia's Records" © Kwanza Humphrey. Preliminary rendering only. Design details subject to change.



"Kansas Rays" © Laura Berman. Preliminary rendering only. Design details subject to change.

Kwanza Humphrey, Laura Berman and Hong Zhang are three of the diverse artists whose work was selected for the Kansas City International Airport's new single terminal and parking project.



"Braidfield" © Hong Zhang. Preliminary rendering only. Design details subject to change.

**"We want art all over the city,  
and we want minority and  
women artists to be counted."**

—Andrea Dorch, director of the City of Kansas City, Mo.,  
Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department

Dorch supports that development. "We're monitoring KCI as part of our economic equity and inclusion," she said, "and we're encouraging new development in the arts, including an Artists as Entrepreneurs program, with the help of art consultant Allan Gray."

Although the artists selected for KCI were not certified, Dorch would like to see artists who qualify pursue diverse business certification. "We want art all over the city, and we want minority and women artists to be counted," she said.



### Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT)

[www.modot.org/dbe-program](http://www.modot.org/dbe-program)

#### CERTIFICATION:

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)

#### VALID FOR:

1 year

Cost for certification: Free

Processing time: 60 days (interstate) to 90 days (Missouri-based)

DBE certification is reciprocal as part of Missouri's Unified Certification Program (UCP).

The Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program is federally mandated by the U.S. Department of Transportation to combat both ongoing and historical discrimination in highway, transit and airport transportation contracts around the country.

"We want our procurement to reflect our community," said Missy Stuedle, MoDOT's director of the External City Rights Division. Missy appreciates the chance to help firms process their applications and she loves watching them land their first projects and grow.

MoDOT focuses on highway construction and the External Civil Rights Division certifies DBE firms. MoDOT's overall DBE goal for the state is 12.45%, based on the number of able and available firms in the industry. See [pie chart](#) for more.

MoDOT aims to level the playing field by offering opportunities to businesses owned by women and minorities: Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian-Pacific Americans and Subcontinent Asian-Americans. Your business is eligible for certification if, in addition to you being a member of one of these groups, your business is at least 51% owned by a socially and economically disadvantaged individual and it meets small business size and personal net worth criteria. Find eligibility requirements on [MoDOT's FAQ page](#).

Stuedle recommends attending MoDOT workshops and reaching out to your local [Missouri PTAC](#) for help when seeking a DBE certification. "Before you fill out the application, create a cover sheet for each area of your business. Use our [checklist](#) and make sure you have everything covered," Stuedle said. "If you have a question, just ask!"

Certification can be the first step to growing your business. "Once you're certified, you need to be ready, willing and able if someone solicits a bid," Stuedle said. "You need to have the equipment and capacity to meet prime contractors' needs."

Being responsible, proactive and ready to build relationships are three keys to success, Stuedle said. She suggests DBEs create a one-page brochure — basically a resume for your company. "Be sure to list all of the equipment you own so prime contractors know what you have to offer," Stuedle said. Once certified and operating for at least three years, in addition to bidding on contracts, DBEs can join MoDOT's [Mentor-Protégé Program](#).



### Missouri Office of Administration

[oa.mo.gov/purchasing/vendor-information/missouri-service-disabled-veteran-business-enterprise-sdve-information](http://oa.mo.gov/purchasing/vendor-information/missouri-service-disabled-veteran-business-enterprise-sdve-information)

#### CERTIFICATION:

#### VALID FOR:

Service-Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (SDVE) 3 years

Cost for certification: Free

The Missouri Office of Administration Division of Purchasing aims to contract with qualified service-disabled veteran business enterprises for 3% of all jobs. To qualify, a business must be at least 51% owned by one or more service-disabled veterans who control its management and daily business operations.

View [Missouri-certified SDVEs](#) or browse [upcoming bid opportunities](#) to get an idea of the array of vendors with whom the Office of Administration contracts. Whether your business specializes in HVAC or honey production, SDVE certification will make it more competitive for a variety of state government bids.

## A voice for veterans

Darcella Craven, president and executive director of VetBiz, has proven how much she cares about veterans. Her St. Louis-based regional office, which covers Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas, was recognized as 2015 Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) of the Year, which brought Craven to Washington, D.C., to testify on behalf of veteran entrepreneurs. Quick with a joke and a smile, Craven said helping veteran entrepreneurs succeed is all about "making sure people get the right info and the right resources at the right time," she said. Craven offers veterans considering certification this advice:

1. **Ensure that working with a government agency is part of your strategy.** "If you're just going to do a one-off government contract and it's not a significant part of your company, don't," she said. "You'll spend more money trying to get that one contract than you'll ever make. There has to be ROI."
2. **Beware of fraud.** "If someone approaches you and says, 'We're going to set you up as a president. You'll do paperwork, but you won't run the company.' Don't do it," Craven said. That could be considered a pass-through and it's against the law. "The federal government doesn't play nice just because you're a veteran," Craven said. "There's no 'get-out-free' card. You go to jail."
3. **Make sure you actually can support the contract.** "If you land a contract for \$1 million and you don't have the infrastructure to turn in reports or you can't afford software for CRM, it could be a financial or operational disaster," she said.

If you're genuinely interested in certification, Craven encourages it. "The state of Missouri certification for service-disabled veterans, SDVE, is a super-easy application," she said. "It's just two pages long." The **federal side** is more complicated. "I want veterans to know that if you want to work with a federal agency, certifying with the Small Business Administration will be just fine," Craven said. "Every federal agency will look to the SBA for certification and verification." If you're interested in private-sector certification as a veteran, contact VetBiz for details. "Private-sector certifications tend to be very specific and corporate-exclusive," Craven said. "Where you certify may depend on the company you're targeting."



### Missouri Office of Equal Opportunity

[oeo.mo.gov/oeo\\_certifications/](http://oeo.mo.gov/oeo_certifications/)

#### CERTIFICATION:

Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)  
Woman Owned Business Enterprise (WBE)

#### VALID FOR:

Both valid for 1 year (for new businesses)  
or 3 years (for experienced businesses)

Cost for certification: Free

Processing time: 60–90 days

Within the state of Missouri, the Office of Equal Opportunity promotes diversity and improves opportunities for minorities and women to access state employment opportunities and contracts. This includes offering small business certifications for minority- and woman-owned businesses.

A key benefit of pursuing certification is the opportunity for your business to appear in the Office of Equal Opportunity's **directory** of certified M/WBE vendors, which is a database that contractors and state agencies reference when looking for small businesses with which to work.

Corey Bolton, director of the Missouri Office of Equal Opportunity, and his staff are eager to support eligible businesses along their certification journey. "Although we work in government, we also live in the same communities as the people seeking certification," he said. "We buy from these people. We share commonalities with these people. Making this a collective community is good for business – for our state and from a personal perspective."

If you need help with the application process, an engagement specialist can walk you through the process and ensure you understand what's expected of you. "Our process is 100% online so, with that, we offer office hours for new vendors," Bolton said. "We try to catch people early in the application process or shortly thereafter so they can ask questions." For assistance, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity at 1-877-259-2963 or 573-751-8130.

Once businesses are certified, the Office of Equal Opportunity invites owners to take part in learning opportunities to grow capacity and **fulfill larger contracts**. Speakers from procurement offices at local universities and colleges, as well as government and corporate representatives, meet with MBEs and WBEs to discuss chances to work together.

Even considering the perks of taking your business to the next level through certification, Bolton encourages you to think critically about whether certification is right for you. He said it should be the final step in your business plan, after your business is already up and running. Certification doesn't jumpstart business growth; it helps sustain and increase growth that's already there, he said.

Bolton says to think about the answers to these questions: "Do you know who you are as a business?" "Are you aware of where you want to be and what steps you need to take to achieve your goals?" Certification may not benefit businesses working within a niche space or a specific community. In those cases, certification "won't do you any good other than being a badge of honor."

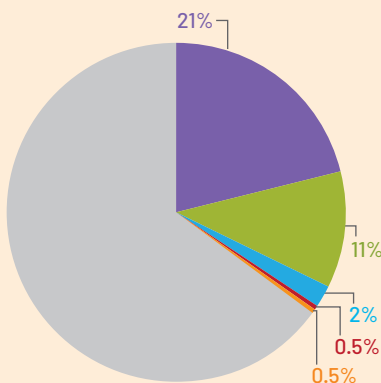
It's a good idea to think local and build from there, Bolton said. "Learn local markets first. When you scale up to the state level, you need to be ready for larger contracts – and you need to have capacity to fulfill them."



## RESOURCES

### A bigger slice of pie

When City of St. Louis city ordinance 70767 passed in 2018, it changed the city's goals for fulfilling contracts with diverse businesses. What does that mean for you? Opportunity. Here are the city's goals:



**21%**  
African-American-owned

**11%**  
Women-owned

**2%**  
Hispanic-American-owned

**0.5%**  
Asian-American-owned

**0.5%**  
Native American-owned

## Certifying bodies in Missouri: Public sector



### St. Louis Lambert International Airport

[www.flystl.com/business/business-diversity-development-1/get-certified](http://www.flystl.com/business/business-diversity-development-1/get-certified)

#### CERTIFICATIONS:

Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE)  
Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)  
Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)  
Women Business Enterprise (WBE)

#### VALID FOR:

1 year  
1 year  
1 year  
1 year

Cost for certification: Free

Processing time: 90 days

DBE certification is reciprocal as part of Missouri's Unified Certification Program (UCP).

St. Louis Lambert International Airport's Business Diversity Development (BDD) department handles certification for both the City of St. Louis' local MWBE program and for the airport's federal DBE and ACDBE programs. That's right: The office at Lambert handles the city, too.

"We're a City of St. Louis Department," said Francoise Lyles-Wiggins, assistant airport director of community programs/business diversity development. "The airport falls within the City of St. Louis' structure and we certify for both the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County."

Minority- and women-owned businesses affect the majority of the city's contracts, Lyles-Wiggins said. With certification, small businesses get the appropriate ACDBE, DBE, MBE or WBE designation as well as technical assistance and additional training. Lambert also is one of the five members of Missouri's **Unified Certification Program** for DBE certification. To qualify for any of these certifications, your business must be 51% owned and managed by one or more individuals who are socially or economically disadvantaged. For ACDBE and DBE certifications, the owner must have a personal net worth under \$1.32 million and the business' annual gross revenues may not exceed the U.S. Small Business Association's **size standards**.

Once businesses are certified, owners can turn to the team at Lambert for help developing relationships with industry contacts and help competing for contracts at the airport — as well as with partners across the region. To find out if your business is a good fit, visit the airport's **Contract Opportunities** page.

The City of St. Louis has ambitious goals for contracting with businesses owned by women, African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Asian-Americans and Native Americans (see pie chart, left). Satisfying those goals can be challenging, said Lyles-Wiggins. "We're trying to reach out to more Asian-American and Native American groups, which are underrepresented," she said. "Our primary goal is to ensure we keep a level playing field by providing diverse businesses a fair opportunity to compete for federally assisted contracts here at the airport."

That commitment starts with sparking interest in certification. "If you're anxious about certification, contact us," Lyles-Wiggins said. "It helps to get a feeling for what's expected in an application." Virtual certification workshops listed at [flystl.com](http://flystl.com) can walk you through the certification process from start to finish. And an annual Business Diversity Development educational series, open to currently certified firms as well as businesses seeking certification, covers topics like "What is a surety bond?" and pairs firms with experts to share ideas about financing and ways to reinvent their business, among other topics.

Most of all, Lyles-Wiggins emphasized, be patient. "There's a lot of documentation required, but if you work with the analysts on our certification team, you'll get the clarity you need: Trust us," she said. "We have your best interests at heart."





**U.S. Small Business Administration**  
[certify.sba.gov/](https://certify.sba.gov/)

#### CERTIFICATIONS:

#### VALID FOR:

8(a) Business Development Program	1 year
Economically Disadvantaged Woman-Owned Small Business (EDWOSB)	1 year
Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) Program	1 year
Small Disadvantaged Business	1 year
Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB)	1 year
Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB)	1 year

Cost for certification: Free

Processing time: 60–90 days

The Small Business Administration (SBA) is a federal organization that offers nationally recognized certification opportunities, administered locally, to small businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, women, service-disabled veterans and businesses in historically underutilized zones (HUBZones). In Missouri, the SBA has district offices in **St. Louis** and **Kansas City**.

The federal government's goal is to award 23% of contracts to small businesses, including 5% to small disadvantaged businesses (SDBs), 3% to service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSB), 5% to women-owned small businesses (WOSB) and 3% to HUBZone small businesses.

If you've been in business at least two years, have strong past performance and financials, access to capital and are engaging in or seeking strategic partnerships, SBA certification may accelerate the growth of your business. "There are advantages to doing business with the federal government," said Gary Alexander, business opportunity specialist for the SBA's St. Louis District Office. "Government mandates mean you're going to get paid."

That said, it takes time to figure out which SBA programs may be right for you, said Alexander, who recommends getting help from organizations like the Missouri Small Business Development Center in St. Louis. See the Helpful organizations list in this guide.

It's also important to meet the requirements of each program and to stay true to your original application, Alexander said. For example, if you're looking at the HUBZone program, 35% of your employees must live in a HUBZone. "All it takes is one person moving out of the HUBZone to put your certification in jeopardy," he said.

All small businesses are eligible to take advantage of the **7(j) Management and Technical Assistance Program**, which offers training, executive education, consulting and classes in accounting, marketing, strategic and operational planning, financial analysis, business development, contract management and compliance. "We provide courses on evenings and weekends to make it convenient," Alexander said.

While each SBA certification is different, they all share a common goal: to make it easier for disadvantaged business owners to compete for and win federal contracts. In partnership with both local and federal resources, the SBA's district offices can help you lay a strong foundation to pursue, accept and execute those contracts. Case in point, here's a useful list of local **microlenders**.

"We help you develop your business and market it to the federal government," Alexander said. "We want you to make money and grow."



This chart compares private sector certifications from three local organizations.

	Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council	Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council	Women's Business Development Center – Midwest*
Sector	Private	Private	Private
Region	National, with focus on Western Missouri	National, with focus on Eastern Missouri	National, with statewide focus
Acronym	Mountain Plains MSDC	Mid-States MSDC	WBDC
Certification type	Minority Business Enterprise	Minority Business Enterprise	Women's Business Enterprise
Certification acronym	MBE	MBE	WBE
Main benefit	Formal and informal activities to foster the development of long-term, mutually beneficial business relationships that bring corporate purchasing professionals together with minority businesses	Formal and informal activities to foster the development of long-term, mutually beneficial business relationships that bring corporate purchasing professionals together with minority businesses	National recognition by government agencies and more than 1,000 major U.S. corporations representing thousands of well-known brands
Other benefits	Networking, subscription services, business opportunity sourcing, coaching, training and development, including workshops, special events and education	Networking, subscription services, business opportunity sourcing, coaching, training and development, including workshops, special events and education	Inclusion in national database; invitations to regional and national events, webinars and training; and eligibility to exhibit at national and regional business expos
Business size	No requirement	No requirement	No requirement
Citizenship	U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents	U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents	U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents
Ownership	At least 51% owned, operated and controlled by people who are racial or ethnic minorities	At least 51% owned, operated and controlled by people who are racial or ethnic minorities	At least 51% owned, operated and controlled by women
Economic requirement	No requirement	No requirement	No requirement
Years in business	At least two years with exceptions	At least two years with exceptions	No requirement
Certification renewal	Annual	Annual	Annual; site visit every three years
Contact info	303-623-3037, headquarters; 816-221-4200, KS/MO office <a href="http://www.mpmsdc.org">www.mpmsdc.org</a>	317-923-2110 <a href="http://midstatesmsdc.org">midstatesmsdc.org</a>	312-853-3477, ext. 100 <a href="http://www.wbenc.org/rpo/wbdc-midwest">www.wbenc.org/rpo/wbdc-midwest</a>

\*Regional affiliate of the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)



This chart compares certifications from three organizations in Kansas City, Mo.

	City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department	Kansas City Area Transit Authority	Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council
Sector	Public	Public	Private
Acronym	CREO	KCATA	Mountain Plains MSDC
Certification types	Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise; Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise; Small Business Enterprise; Small Local Business Enterprise	Disadvantaged Business Enterprise; Minority Business Enterprise; Small Business Enterprise; Women's Business Enterprise	Minority Business Enterprise
Certification acronym	ACDBE, DBE, MBE, SBE, SLBE, WBE	DBE, MBE, SBE, WBE	MBE
Main benefit	Prime contractors are encouraged and expected to use certified subcontractors on Missouri state contracts.	Prime contractors are encouraged to use city-certified subcontractors on municipal/county agency projects.	Formal and informal activities to foster the development of long-term, mutually beneficial business relationships that bring corporate purchasing professionals together with minority businesses
Other benefits	Mutual certification within Missouri's Unified Certification Program, called the Missouri Regional Certification Committee (MRCC), and inclusion in MRCC Directory; Mentor-Protégé Program	Mutual certification within Missouri's Unified Certification Program, called the Missouri Regional Certification Committee (MRCC), and inclusion in MRCC Directory; quarterly workshops; online reporting systems; unsolicited proposal process	Networking, subscription services, business opportunity sourcing, coaching, training and development, including workshops, special events and education
Business size	Must meet <b>Small Business Administration (SBA) size standards</b>	Must meet <b>Small Business Administration (SBA) size standards</b>	No requirement
Citizenship	Not specified	U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents	U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents
Ownership	At least 51% owned, operated and controlled by women or racial or ethnic minorities	At least 51% owned, operated and controlled by women or racial or ethnic minorities	At least 51% owned, operated and controlled by people who are racial or ethnic minorities
Economic requirement	Personal net worth less than \$1.32 million	Personal net worth less than \$1.32 million	No requirement
Years in business	Six months headquartered within and three years transacting within the Kansas City Metropolitan Statistical Area	No requirement	At least two years with exceptions
Certification renewal	Annual	Every three years	Annual
Contact info	816-513-0850 <a href="http://www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/human-relations/certification-and-compliance">www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/human-relations/certification-and-compliance</a>	816-346-0227 <a href="http://www.kcata.org/about-kcata/entries/mbe-and-wbe-programs">www.kcata.org/about-kcata/entries/mbe-and-wbe-programs</a>	303-623-3037, headquarters; 816-221-4200, KS/MO office <a href="http://www.mpsmdc.org">www.mpsmdc.org</a>



This chart compares certifications from three organizations in St. Louis.

	St. Louis Lambert International Airport Business Diversity Department	Bi-State Development	Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council
Sector	Public	Public	Private
Acronym	BDD	BSD	Mid-States MSDC
Certification types	Airport Concessions Disadvantaged Business Enterprise; Disadvantaged Business Enterprise; Minority Business Enterprise; Women Business Enterprise	Disadvantaged Business Enterprise	Minority Business Enterprise
Certification acronym	ACDBE, DBE, MBE, WBE	DBE	MBE
Main benefit	Prime contractors are encouraged to use certified subcontractors on federally funded contracts.	Prime contractors are encouraged to use certified subcontractors on federally funded contracts.	Formal and informal activities to foster the development of long-term, mutually beneficial business relationships that bring corporate purchasing professionals together with minority businesses.
Other benefits	Technical assistance, certification workshops and training	Mutual certification within Missouri's Unified Certification Program, called the Missouri Regional Certification Committee (MRCC), and inclusion in MRCC Directory; certification, compliance and vendor system training; USDOT Short Term Lending Program; STL contractor loan fund	Networking, subscription services, business opportunity sourcing, coaching, training and development, including workshops, special events and education
Business size	Must meet <b>Small Business Administration (SBA) size standards</b>	Must meet <b>Small Business Administration (SBA) size standards</b>	No requirement
Citizenship	Not specified	Not specified	U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents
Ownership	At least 51% owned, operated and controlled by women, racial or ethnic minorities or economically disadvantaged individuals	At least 51% owned, operated and controlled by economically disadvantaged individuals	At least 51% owned, operated and controlled by people who who are racial or ethnic minorities
Economic requirement	Personal net worth less than \$1.32 million	Personal net worth less than \$1.32 million	No requirement
Years in business	No requirement	No requirement	At least two years with exceptions
Certification renewal	Annual	Every three years	Annual
Contact info	314-426-8111 <a href="http://www.flystl.com/business/business-diversity-development-1/get-certified">www.flystl.com/business/business-diversity-development-1/get-certified</a>	816-346-0227 <a href="http://www.bistatedev.org/vendor-resources/supplier-diversity/dbe-certification/">www.bistatedev.org/vendor-resources/supplier-diversity/dbe-certification/</a>	317-923-2110 <a href="http://midstatesmsdc.org">midstatesmsdc.org</a>



This chart compares three public-sector certifications at the state and federal level.

	Missouri Office of Equal Opportunity	U.S. Small Business Administration	Missouri Department of Transportation
Sector	Public	Public	Public
Region	Statewide	Federal; statewide	Federal; statewide
Acronym	OEO	SBA	MoDOT
Certification type	Minority Business Enterprise; Women's Business Enterprise	8(a) Business Development Program; Economically Disadvantaged Woman-Owned Small Business; Historically Underutilized Business Zone Program; Small Disadvantaged Business; Woman-Owned Small Business; Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business*	Disadvantaged Business Enterprise
Certification acronym	MBE, WBE	8(a), EDWOSB, HUBZone, SDB, WOSB, SDVOSB	DBE**
Main benefit	Prime contractors are encouraged and expected to use certified subcontractors on Missouri state contracts.	Prime contractors are encouraged to use certified subcontractors on federally funded contracts.	Prime contractors are encouraged to use certified subcontractors on federally funded contracts.
Other benefits	Inclusion in OEO's Directory of Certified M/WBE vendors, used by all state agencies except MoDOT	7(j) Management and Technical Assistance Program; Mentor-Protégé Program	Mutual certification within Missouri's Unified Certification Program, called the Missouri Regional Certification Committee (MRCC), and inclusion in MRCC Directory; On the Job Training Program; Mentor-Protégé Program
Business size	No requirement	Must meet <b>Small Business Administration (SBA) size standards</b>	Must meet <b>Small Business Administration (SBA) size standards</b> . Three-year average gross receipts not to exceed \$23.98 million.
Citizenship	U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents	U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents	U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents
Ownership	At least 51% owned, operated and controlled by women or racial or ethnic minorities	At least 51% owned, operated and controlled by one or more qualifying individuals	At least 51% owned and controlled by a person or people with socially or economically disadvantaged status
Economic requirement	No requirement	Personal net worth less than \$750,000 and personal income less than \$350,000 (three-year average)	Personal net worth less than \$1.32 million and personal income less than \$350,000 (three-year average)
Years in business	No requirement	Three years	No requirement
Certification renewal	Annual for new businesses; every three years for experienced businesses	Annual	Annual affidavit of no change; once certified, business remains so until it no longer qualifies for the program
Contact info	877-259-2963 <a href="https://oeo.mo.gov/oeo-certifications/">oeo.mo.gov/oeo-certifications/</a>	Kansas City, Mo.: 816-426-4900 St. Louis: 314-539-6600 <a href="https://certify.sba.gov/">certify.sba.gov/</a>	573-526-2978 <a href="https://www.modot.org/dbe-program">www.modot.org/dbe-program</a>

\*After Jan. 1, 2023

\*\*Reciprocal as part of Missouri's Unified Certification Program (UCP)

## The full list.

This alphabetical list includes certifications offered in Missouri. You'll find more information about each certification throughout this guide. Use the hyperlinks to go directly to each organization.

Certification:	8(a) Business/Small Disadvantaged Business
Issued by:	<b><u>Small Business Administration</u></b> (SBA)
Certification:	Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department</u></b> at St. Louis Lambert International Airport; <b><u>City of Kansas City Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department</u></b>
Certification:	Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>Missouri Department of Transportation</u></b> (MoDOT); <b><u>Kansas City Area Transportation Authority</u></b> (KCATA); <b><u>City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department</u></b> at St. Louis Lambert International Airport; <b><u>City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department</u></b> ; <b><u>Bi-State Development</u></b> (BSD)
Certification:	Economically Disadvantaged Women-Owned Small Business (EDWOSB)
Issued by:	<b><u>Small Business Administration</u></b> (SBA)
Certification:	Historically Underutilized Business Zones (HUBZone)
Issued by:	<b><u>Small Business Administration</u></b> (SBA)
Certification:	Certified LGBT Business Enterprise (LGBTE)
Issued by:	<b><u>National LGBT Chamber of Commerce</u></b>
Certification:	Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council</u></b> (Eastern Missouri) <b><u>Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council</u></b> (Western Missouri)
Certification:	Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department at St. Louis Lambert International Airport</u></b>
Certification:	Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>Kansas City Area Transportation Authority</u></b> (KCATA)
Certification:	Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>State of Missouri Office of Equal Opportunity</u></b>
Certification:	Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department</u></b>
Certification:	Service-Disabled Veteran Business (SDVE)
Issued by:	<b><u>Missouri Office of Administration, Division of Purchasing</u></b>
Certification:	Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB)
Issued by:	<b><u>U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Small &amp; Disadvantaged Business Utilization Vets First Verification Program</u></b>

Certification:	Small Business Enterprise (SBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department</u></b>
Certification:	Small Business Enterprise (SBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA)</u></b>
Certification:	Small Local Business Enterprise (SLBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department</u></b>
Certification:	Small Local Business Enterprise Water Services Department Engineering Professional (SLBE-WSDEPS)
Issued by:	<b><u>City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department</u></b>
Certification:	Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB)
Issued by:	<b><u>U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Small &amp; Disadvantaged Business Utilization Vets First Verification Program</u></b> and <b><u>Small Business Administration (SBA)</u></b>
Certification:	Women's Business Enterprise (WBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>Women's Business Development Center – Midwest</u></b> , regional affiliate of the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)
Certification:	Women Business Enterprise (WBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department</u></b>
Certification:	Women Business Enterprise (WBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>City of St. Louis Business Diversity Development Department at St. Louis Lambert International Airport</u></b>
Certification:	Women's Business Enterprise (WBE)
Issued by:	<b><u>Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA)</u></b>
Certification:	Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB)
Issued by:	<b><u>Small Business Administration (SBA)</u></b>

“Certification is confusing. It has been confusing for 25 years. Our workshops can help you sort out the different acronyms and designations.”

—Francoise Lyles-Wiggins, St. Louis Lambert International Airport  
Community Programs/Business Diversity Development



You can't wade far into a conversation about certifications without becoming soaked in an alphabet soup of acronyms. Use this glossary to help you sort out the DBEs, IVOSBs and SDVOSBs.

Acronym	What it stands for	What it means
7(j)	7(j) Management and Technical Assistance Program	Federal program for businesses that meet size standards to pursue federal, state and local contracts
8(a)	8(a) Business Development	Federal program for businesses owned and controlled by economically or socially disadvantaged people to pursue federal, state and local contracts
ACDBE	Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise	Federal program administered by each state for small businesses owned and controlled by economically disadvantaged people who are interested in airport concessions
BSD	Bi-State Development	Public certifying entity that encourages economic development in the St. Louis area (Missouri and Illinois)
CRM	Customer Relationship Management	A system for managing a company's relationships and interactions with customers and potential customers
DBE	Disadvantaged Business Enterprise	Federal program administered by each state for small businesses owned and controlled by economically disadvantaged people
DMWBE	Disadvantaged Minority/Women's Business Enterprise Program	Federal certification for businesses owned and controlled by a disadvantaged minority, a disadvantaged woman or group of either
EDWOSB	Economically Disadvantaged Women-Owned Small Business	Federal certification for small businesses owned and controlled by economically disadvantaged women
EWG	East-West Gateway Council of Governments	Forum for cooperation and the coordinated development of regional policy for governments in the St. Louis area and surrounding Missouri and Illinois counties
HUBZone	Historically Underutilized Business Zones	Federal certification for small businesses located in specific zones identified as underutilized

Acronym	What it stands for	What it means
KCATA	Kansas City Area Transportation Authority	Bi-state agency that addresses the transportation and development needs of the Kansas City region
KCI	Kansas City International	New airport serving the Kansas City area, also referred to as MCI
KCMSA	Greater Kansas City Metropolitan Statistical Area	Government-designated core area containing a substantial population nucleus, together with adjacent communities having a high degree of economic and social integration with that core. In Kansas City, this includes Cass, Clay, Johnson, Jackson, Platte, Wyandotte and Leavenworth counties.
LGBTBE	LGBT Business Enterprise	National private certification for businesses owned and controlled by LGBTQ people
LGBTQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning	Term used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity
LPA	Local Public Agency	Liaison between MoDOT and local governments
MARC	Mid-America Regional Council	Non-profit association of city and county governments and the metropolitan planning organization for the bistate Kansas City region
MBE	Minority Business Enterprise	Federal certification for businesses owned and controlled by those who are of a qualifying minority
MoDOT	Missouri Department of Transportation	Missouri agency regulating transportation and transportation-related concerns
MPMSDC	Mountain Plains Minority Supplier Development Council	Regional office of the National Minority Supplier Development Council that serves Western Missouri
MRCC	Missouri Regional Certification Committee	Unified Certification Program for Missouri
MSMSDC	Mid-States Minority Supplier Development Council	Regional office of the National Minority Supplier Development Council that serves Eastern Missouri
M/WBE	Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise	Certification offered by the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority for minority- and women-owned businesses

Acronym	What it stands for	What it means
MWDBE	Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise	Shorthand term for three distinct certifications offered by the City of Kansas City, Mo., Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Department: MBE, WBE and DBE
NCA	No Change Affidavit	Recertification document affirming that there has been no change in a business' disadvantaged status since original certification
NGLCC	National LGBT Chamber of Commerce	National private certification organization specializing in LGBTQ causes
NMSDC	National Minority Supplier Development Council	National office of a private certification organization specializing in minority causes
NOFA	Notice of Funding Availability	Publicly published call for applications for government-funded projects
OSDBU	Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization	Office of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that handled certifications before Jan. 1, 2023
PTAC	Missouri Procurement Technical Assistance Center	State center that assists businesses – including small, disadvantaged, veteran- and women-owned firms – to obtain federal, state and local government contracts
RFP	Request for Proposals	Document that describes in detail what product or service a customer wants to buy and how bids will be evaluated
SAM	System for Award Management	U.S. government vendor registration system
SBA	Small Business Administration	Federal agency supporting small businesses
SBDC	Small Business Development Centers	Centers staffed by business specialists who use their expertise to help Missouri businesses with critical development issues
SBE	Small Business Enterprise	State certification for businesses meeting specific economic criteria
SCORE	Service Corps of Retired Executives	Small Business Administration-supported network of free volunteer small business mentors

Acronym	What it stands for	What it means
SDI	Supplier Diversity Initiative	Program that encourages businesses to use suppliers owned by minorities, women, veterans, service-disabled veterans, LGBTQ people and businesses defined as small by the Small Business Administration or located in historically underutilized areas
SDVE	Service-Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise	Federal certification for businesses owned by veterans whose disability was incurred or aggravated in service
SDVOSB	Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business	Federal certification for small businesses owned and operated by veterans who have been disabled in service
SLBE	Small Local Business Enterprise	Race- and gender-neutral certification that provides contracting preferences for eligible and qualified local, small businesses
SLBE-WSDEPS	Small Local Business Enterprise Water Services Department Engineering Professional	Race- and gender-neutral certification for small, local business owners who'd like to work with the City of Kansas City, Mo., Water Services Department
UCP	Unified Certification Program	State program that allows Disadvantaged Business Enterprise certifications to be honored throughout Missouri
VA	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	Federal agency supporting veterans
VBE	Veteran Business Enterprise	Federal certification for businesses owned and controlled by veterans
VOSB	Veteran-Owned Small Business	Federal certification for small businesses owned and operated by veterans
WBDC	Women's Business Development Center – Midwest	Regional affiliate of the Women's Business Enterprise National Council
WBE	Women's Business Enterprise	Federal certification for businesses owned and controlled by women
WBENC	Women's Business Enterprise National Council	National private certification organization specializing in women's causes that operates Women's Business Development Centers
WOSB	Women-Owned Small Business	Federal certification for small businesses owned and controlled by women



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