

# DBE Disparity Study

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is conducting a disparity study of its Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program to ensure that minority- and women-owned businesses have equal access to contracting opportunities and that the current program remains legally defensible and administratively successful.

### WHAT IS A “DISPARITY STUDY”?

A disparity study involves compilation of evidence to determine if the agency has a strong basis for implementing race- and gender-conscious contracting remedies and narrowly tailoring any race- and gender-conscious remedies. This includes statistical evidence of disparities, if any, between the availability of minority- and women-owned business enterprises and their utilization on agency contracts and related subcontracts and throughout the area economy as a whole.

The study will further examine factors necessary for entrepreneurial success, such as access to business capital, bonding, networks, suppliers, etc. The study also will gather anecdotal evidence of any continuing effects of past or present race and sex discrimination, and the impact of the current DBE program. Finally, the study will review WSDOT’s current DBE program and activities and make recommendations for future initiatives and enhancements.

### WHO IS CONDUCTING THE STUDY?

Following a competitive proposal process, the contract to conduct this study was awarded to Colette Holt & Associates (CHA), a nationally recognized expert team on disparity studies and DBE programs, in conjunction with local partner, Pacific Communications Consulting, Inc.

### WHEN WILL THE STUDY BE COMPLETED?

The study is anticipated to be completed in Spring 2017.

### WILL THE STUDY DETERMINE WSDOT’S DBE GOAL?

The study will provide a determination of the availability of women- and minority-owned firms as a percentage of all firms in WSDOT’s industry and geographic market areas, as well as other relevant statistical and anecdotal data. This information can be used to assist WSDOT in setting its overall triennial DBE goal for federal-aid contracts and DBE goals on specific contracts.

### THE 2012 DISPARITY STUDY RESULTED IN A RECOMMENDATION FOR THE REMOVAL OF WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES FROM WSDOT DBE GOAL CREDIT. WILL THIS STUDY DO THE SAME?

The methodology, timeframe, and contract data reviewed for the current study differ significantly from that of the 2012 study. The current study methodology makes no assumptions regarding potential study findings and is not factoring the findings and recommendations from the previous study into current efforts.

### HOW CAN BUSINESS OWNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS BE INVOLVED?

The participation of business owners and stakeholders (trade associations, advocacy groups, community organizations, etc.) is critical to the study’s outcomes in two important ways. First, the study team will contact businesses to confirm information on specific contracts and/or to receive additional contract information that is currently not available to WSDOT. With the support and assistance of business owners and stakeholders, the study will present an accurate analysis of WSDOT’s contracting activities.

Second, interested persons can be part of the process for anecdotal data collection by participating in business owner interviews, through group representatives at the stakeholder sessions or submitting written comments on their experiences and observations to the study team.

## HOW WILL BUSINESS OWNER INTERVIEWS BE CONDUCTED AND HOW DO I PARTICIPATE?

Small group interviews will be conducted in multi-session meetings held throughout the state in Fall 2016. Participants who are unable to attend the interviews but who would like to provide input to the study are encouraged to submit written statements at the study email: [wsdot\\_study@mwbellow.com](mailto:wsdot_study@mwbellow.com).

The current anticipated locations for business owner interviews include:

- North Seattle
- South Seattle
- Yakima
- Vancouver
- Spokane

Information on how to participate in the business owner interviews will be posted online at [wsdot.disparity-study.com](http://wsdot.disparity-study.com). Business owners seeking to participate in the interviews should contact the study team at [wsdot\\_study@mwbellow.com](mailto:wsdot_study@mwbellow.com). Those who are unable to attend are encouraged to submit written statements.

## WHAT ARE “STAKEHOLDERS” AND HOW WILL THEY BE ENGAGED?

Stakeholders are organizations that represent the interests of the firms or groups affected by the WSDOT DBE Program. Representatives from stakeholder organizations will be invited to attend group interview sessions. Meetings are by invitation only. Organizations that wish to participate should contact the study team at [wsdot\\_study@mwbellow.com](mailto:wsdot_study@mwbellow.com).

The current anticipated locations for stakeholder meetings are:

- Seattle
- Spokane
- Vancouver
- Yakima

Information on how to participate in the stakeholder meeting information will be posted online at [wsdot.disparity-study.com](http://wsdot.disparity-study.com).

## WHO DO I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

You may contact Colette Holt & Associates at [wsdot\\_study@mwbellow.com](mailto:wsdot_study@mwbellow.com) or call (855) 692-3529. You may also contact Jackie Bayne, WSDOT disparity study manager, at [BayneJ@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:BayneJ@wsdot.wa.gov) or call (360) 705-7084.

## WHERE CAN I FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

For additional information, visit the study website at [wsdot.disparity-study.com](http://wsdot.disparity-study.com) or contact the study team at [wsdot\\_study@mwbellow.com](mailto:wsdot_study@mwbellow.com).

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