

**REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CITY OF HOUSTON PROGRAM FOR  
MINORITY, WOMEN, AND SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISES (MWSBE) AND  
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ENTERPRISES (PDBE)**

**CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS**

**I. GENERAL**

**A. CITY AUTHORITIES**

1. The “OBO Director” is the City of Houston’s Office of Business Opportunity Director, or his or her designee.

City of Houston  
611 Walker Street, 7th Floor  
Houston, Texas 77002

2. The “Contracting Department” for this Project is the City of Houston Department specified in Document 00520 – Agreement.
3. The “Project Manager” for this Project is specified in Document 00550, Contract Approval Notification.

**II. REOCCURRING REPORTS THAT MUST BE SUBMITTED DURING THE COURSE OF THE CONTRACT:**

**A. MWSBE MONTHLY REPORT PROCESS**

The Contractor shall complete the MWSBE Monthly Utilization Report in the Contract Compliance and Monitoring System (available at <https://houston.mwdbe.com/>).

- B.** The Contractor shall comply with further, applicable instructions regarding reporting and compliance as provided in Sections III.E and III.I below.

**III. BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:**

**A. PURPOSE**

This Document facilitates implementation of City of Houston, Tex. Code of Ordinances Chapter 15, Article V, § 15-81 *et seq.*, relating to MWSBE contract participation, and Code of Ordinances Chapter 15, Article VI, § 15-90 *et seq.*,

relating to PDBE contract participation (collectively, the “Business Enterprise Program or “MWSBE”). City of Houston, Tex. Ordinance 2013-0428, May 8, 2013.

## **B. POLICY**

It is the policy of the City to encourage the full participation of Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises, Small Business Enterprises, and Persons with Disabilities Business Enterprises in all phases of its procurement activities and to afford them a full and fair opportunity to compete for City contracts at all levels.

## **C. POLICY ELEMENTS**

1. The Contractor agrees to ensure that MWSBE firms have a full and fair opportunity to participate in the performance of City contracts. In this regard the Contractor shall make all reasonable Good Faith Efforts to meet the Contract Goals for this Contract.
2. The Contractor and any Subcontractor shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex in the performance of City contracts.
3. Contractor's performance in meeting the Participation Plan Percentage will be monitored during the construction phase of the Contract by the Office of Business Opportunity (“OBO”) and the Contracting Department (the “Department”).

## **D. PERCENTAGE GOALS**

The MWSBE goals and PDBE goals, if any, for the Work are specified in Document 00800 – Supplementary Conditions Goals.

## **E. CONTRACTOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. **Prior to Award:**

The Bidder shall submit MWSBE documents in accordance with the requirements of Document 00410 – Bid Form Part A.

  - a. In accordance with the Code of Ordinances and the OBO Good Faith Efforts Policy (Attachment A), the Department shall approve an Apparent Low Bidder’s MWSBE Participation Plan, Document 00470 (the “Bidder’s Plan” or “Plan”), within three business days of the Bid Opening only if the Department representative determines that Bidder’s Plan meets the advertised Contract Goal and is administratively complete.

- b.** If the Department cannot approve the Bidder's Plan, it shall forward the Plan to OBO, who shall review the Bidder's Plan, and if applicable, the Bidder's Document 00471 (Record of Good Faith Efforts) and Document 00472 (Pre-Award Deviation Request) and determine whether the Bidder has made Good Faith Efforts to meet the Contract Goals within 10 business days of the Bid Opening.
- c.** If OBO determines that the Bidder has failed to provide a valid participation plan or make Good Faith Efforts or if the Bidder fails to provide documents and associated information required by this Document 00808 or reasonably requested in writing by OBO, OBO may declare the Bidder to be non-responsible.
- d.** If OBO determines that the Bidder has made Good Faith Efforts, OBO may approve the Bidder's Contract Goal Deviation request. Thereafter, the Bidder/Contractor shall be bound by the Plan, as approved or modified by OBO.
- e.** The Contractor shall:

  - (1)** ensure that all MWSBE firms listed in the Plan are certified by the Office of Business Opportunity prior to bid date. Qualified, non-certified firms may obtain priority consideration for certification if no more than two firms are certified with the same capability as the non-certified firm.
  - (2)** execute written contracts with all certified Subcontractors and Suppliers. All such contracts must be executed and sent to OBO and Contracting Department within 30 days after the date of the Notice to Proceed and must include provisions set forth in Articles 3 and 5 of Document 00700, General Conditions; and
  - (3)** designate an MWSBE liaison officer who will administer the Contractor's MWSBE program and who shall document and maintain records of Good Faith Efforts to subcontract with MWSBE Subcontractors and Suppliers.

**2. After Award:**

- a.** The Contractor shall submit MWSBE Monthly Utilization Reports, as requested in Article II above.
- b.** The Contractor shall complete and submit to OBO a deviation request if the Contractor reasonably believes that it will not achieve the Business Enterprise Program Participation Plan Percentage documented in the Plan. The Contractors shall also submit to OBO, with a copy to the Contracting Department, a Record of Post-Award Good Faith Efforts (Document 00571) for each Certified Firm that the Contractor does not use in accordance with the Approved Plan before the Contractor uses another firm to perform the work.
- c.** The Contractor shall conform to the Plan unless OBO approves a

deviation request. OBO shall approve or reject a request for deviation within five business days of receipt of the request.

- d. OBO shall approve a deviation request if:
  - (1) for a reason beyond the Contractor's control, the Contractor is unable to use the certified MWSBE firm in the Plan to perform the specified work. In such cases, the Contractor shall use and document Good Faith Efforts to find a similarly qualified, certified MWSBE firm to perform such specified work; or
  - (2) the Contractor reasonably believes that, due to a change of scope, execution of the work in accordance with the directions from the Contracting Department is unlikely to meet the terms of the Plan. In such cases, the Contractor shall use and document Good Faith efforts to achieve a reasonable amount of MWSBE participation on the remaining work on the Contract.
  - (3) OBO shall not unreasonably withhold approval of a deviation request.
- e. After the Date of Substantial Completion, OBO shall evaluate the Contractor's Good Faith Efforts towards meeting the Plan, as it may be amended.
- f. If the Contractor fails to conform to the Plan and fails to submit a Post-Award Deviation Request or provide documents and associated information required by the Good Faith Efforts Policy or reasonably requested in writing by OBO, OBO may impose sanctions in accordance with Article VI of this Document 00808.

## **F. ELIGIBILITY OF MWSBE FIRMS FOR SUBCONTRACTING**

- 1. To ensure that the City's Business Enterprise Program benefits only those firms that are owned and controlled by a minority person(s), a woman (women), a person(s) with a disability, or a small business enterprise, the Office of Business Opportunity will certify the eligibility of MWSBE and PDDBE Contractors, Subcontractors, and Suppliers. Contact the OBO Certification Division at 832-393-0600 for information regarding certification.
- 2. Firms must be certified by OBO at the time of bid in order to be counted towards meeting MWSBE goals. OBO maintains a Certified Minority, Women and Small Business Enterprises and Persons with Disabilities Business Enterprises Directory on the City's website. This Directory also lists federally-designated Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs).

## **G. DETERMINATION OF MWSBE PARTICIPATION**

MWSBE participation shall be counted toward meeting the Contract Goals in

response to the following:

1. Contractor may count toward its Contract Goals only those MWSBE Subcontractors/ Suppliers performing a Commercially Useful Function.
  - a. **COMMERCIALLY USEFUL FUNCTION** means a discrete task or group of tasks, the responsibility for performance of which shall be discharged by the MWSBE firm by using its own forces or by actively supervising on-site the execution of the tasks by another entity for whose work the MWSBE firm is responsible. In determining whether a certified firm is performing a commercially useful function, factors including but not limited to the following shall be considered: (1) whether the firm has the skill and expertise to perform the work for which it is being utilized and possesses all necessary licenses; (2) whether the firm is in the business of performing, managing, or supervising the work for which it has been certified and is being utilized; and (3) whether it is performing a real and actual service that is a distinct and verifiable element of the work called for in a contract. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, a MWSBE will not be considered to be performing a commercially useful function, if it subcontracts more than 50 percent of a contract being counted toward the applicable Contract Goals, unless such subcontracting in excess of 50 percent has been expressly approved by OBO either pre-bid or post award.
  - b. OBO shall approve a Plan Deviation Request if the Contractor demonstrates that the industry standard for the type of work involved is to subcontract over 50 percent of the work.
2. Once a firm is certified as a MWSBE firm, the total dollar value of the subcontract awarded to the MWSBE firm is counted toward the Contract Goals, counting only the work in which the MWSBE has performed a Commercially Useful Function. The use of one MWSBE certified firm to meet multiple goals (e.g. MBE, WBE, SBE goals) on a contract is prohibited, unless expressly approved by OBO. Safety and Participation goals do not count as a single goal concerning MWSBE/DBE requirements.
3. The dollar value of the work performed by a certified Prime Contractor may not be counted toward the MWSBE goal unless the certified Prime Contractor is a part of a joint venture. When the Contractor or Subcontractor is in a joint venture with one or more MWSBE firms, OBO shall determine the percent of participation resulting from such joint venture to be counted toward the Contract Goals. The City may count towards the Contractor's MWSBE contract goal that portion of the total value of the contract amount paid to an MWSBE joint venturer equal

to the distinct, clearly defined portion of the contract work performed by the MWSBE.

4. A MWSBE Supplier's participation will be counted towards the MWSBE goals if all of the following criteria are met. The MWSBE Supplier must:
  - (a) negotiate price;
  - (b) determine quality and quantity;
  - (c) order the materials;
  - (d) show that the invoice is in the certified firm's name;
  - (e) pay for the material itself;
  - (f) control delivery; and
  - (g) be certified to provide the supplies in the appropriate NAICS code.

If the listed criteria above are not met, only the entire amount of fees or commissions charged for assistance in the procurement of the supplies and materials, or fees or transportation charges for the delivery of supplies or materials required on a job site will be counted towards the MWSBE goal. To be counted, proof must be provided of the fees paid and the fees must be reasonable and not excessive as compared with fees customarily allowed for similar services. MWSBE Supplier participation may account for no more than 50% of the MWSBE participation plan.

5. The OBO Policy and Procedures Manual, as amended from time to time, shall apply to the Contract for other determinations regarding counting MWSBE participation not explicitly provided for in the Contract.

## H. CONTRACTOR COMPLIANCE

To ensure compliance with MWSBE requirements, OBO and the Department will monitor Contractor's efforts regarding MWSBE Subcontractors/Suppliers during the performance of this Contract. This may be accomplished through the following: job site visits; reviewing of records and reports; and interviews of randomly selected personnel.

## I. RECORDS AND REPORTS

1. In accordance with II.A of this Document, the Contractor shall submit an initial report outlining MWSBE participation 40 days after the Notice to Proceed date, and on or before the 15th day of each month thereafter until all MWSBE subcontracting or material supply activity is completed. Each report shall cover the preceding month's activity. The Contractor shall use the MWSBE Contract Compliance and Monitoring System (B2G Now) to meet this requirement.
2. Contractor shall maintain the following records for review upon request by OBO or the Department:

- a. Copies of executed Subcontractor agreements and purchase orders;
  - b. Documentation of payments and other transactions with MWSBE Subcontractors/ Suppliers; and
  - c. Appropriate explanations of any changes or replacements of MWSBE Subcontractors/Suppliers. All replacement MWSBE Subcontractors/Suppliers must be certified by OBO.
  - d. Any other records required by OBO or Contracting Department.
3. If a Participation Plan Percentage is not being met, the monthly report shall include a narrative description of the progress being made in MWSBE participation. If sufficient MWSBE Subcontractors or Suppliers to meet the Participation Plan Percentage are being utilized, they should be identified by name and the dollar amount paid to date for work performed or materials furnished by each MWSBE during the monthly period. Reports are required when no activity has occurred in a monthly period.
  4. Contractor shall retain all such records for a period of four years following completion of the Work and shall be available at reasonable times and places for inspection by authorized representatives of the City including the City Controller.

#### **IV. SANCTIONS:**

##### **A. SUSPENSION PERIOD AND WAIVER**

Pursuant to Section 15-86 of the Code of Ordinances, OBO is authorized to suspend any Contractor who has failed to make Good Faith Efforts for a period of up to, but not to exceed, five years.

##### **B. GUIDELINES FOR IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS**

###### **1. General:**

- a. OBO shall not impose any sanction except upon evidence of specific conduct on the part of a MWSBE or Contractor that is inconsistent with, or in direct contravention of, specific applicable requirements for Good Faith Efforts.
- b. Imposition and enforcement of suspensions shall be consistent with applicable state law.

###### **2. Severity of Sanctions:**

- a. In determining the length of any suspension, OBO shall consider the following factors:
  - (1) Whether the failure to comply with applicable requirements involved intentional conduct or, alternatively,

may be reasonably concluded to have resulted from a misunderstanding on the part of the Contractor or MWSBE of the duties imposed on them by Article V of Chapter 15 of the Code of Ordinances and these procedures;

- (2) The number of specific incidences of failure by Contractor or MWSBE to comply;
  - (3) Whether the Contractor or MWSBE has been previously suspended;
  - (4) Whether the Contractor or MWSBE has failed or refused to provide OBO with any information requested by OBO's Director or required to be submitted to OBO's Director pursuant to law or these procedures;
  - (5) Whether the Contractor or MWSBE has materially misrepresented any applicable facts in any filing or communication to OBO; and
  - (6) Whether any subsequent restructuring of the subject business or other action has been undertaken to cure the deficiencies in meeting applicable requirements.
- b. Suspensions may be for any length of time not to exceed five years. Suspensions in excess of one year shall be reserved for cases involving intentional or fraudulent misrepresentation or concealment of material facts, multiple acts in contravention of applicable requirements, cases where the Contractor or MWSBE has been previously suspended, or other similarly egregious conduct.

### C. APPEALS

A decision to implement a suspension may be taken after notice and an opportunity for an informal conciliation conference with OBO and a hearing by the Contract Compliance Commission. Commission members shall not have participated in the actions or investigations giving rise to the suspension hearing.

### D. NOTICE

1. Prior to imposing any suspension, OBO shall deliver written notice to the Contractor or MWSBE setting forth the grounds for the proposed suspension and setting a date, time, and place to appear for an informal conciliation conference with OBO, in addition to information regarding the appearance before the Contract Compliance Commission for a hearing on the matter.
2. Any notice required or permitted to be given hereunder to any Contractor or MWSBE may be given either by personal delivery or by certified United States mail, postage prepaid, return receipt requested, addressed to their



most recent address as specified in the records of the Office of Business Opportunity or in the Contract if no address is on file with the Office of Business Opportunity.

**E. HEARING PROCEDURES**

Proceedings before the Contract Compliance Commission shall be conducted in accordance with Section 15-23 of the Code of Ordinances. If the Commission, in a written decision, finds that a suspension is supported by the evidence presented, the Commission shall submit its recommendation to the Mayor and City Council.

## ATTACHMENT A

# City of Houston Office of Business Opportunity Good Faith Efforts Policy

### **General Policy.**

Good Faith Efforts are steps taken to achieve an Contract Goal or other requirements which, by their scope, intensity and usefulness demonstrates the bidder's responsiveness to fulfill the business opportunity objective prior to the award of a contract, as well as the contractor's responsibility to put forth measures to meet or exceed the Contract Goal throughout the duration of the contract.

Good Faith Efforts are required to be made and demonstrated by an apparent successful bidder on goal oriented contracts or proposer on a regulated contract prior to award of a contract. Good Faith Efforts are required on professional services and construction contracts and on procurement of goods and non-professional service contracts with goals. If a bidder, when submitting a participation plan at the time of bid or proposal submission, anticipates it cannot or will not meet the Contract Goal prior to the award, the bidder must demonstrate to Office of Business Opportunity ("OBO") it has made Good Faith Efforts to meet the Contract Goal, to be eligible for the contract award.

Good Faith Efforts shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in making a determination whether a bidder or contractor is in compliance with this policy. The efforts employed by a bidder or contractor should be those that one could reasonably expect a bidder or contractor to take if the bidder were actively and aggressively attempting to obtain MWSBE participation sufficient to meet the Contract Goal. Efforts taken that are mere formalities or other perfunctory acts shall not be considered Good Faith Efforts to meet Contract Goals.

The factors provided herein are representative of the types of actions OBO will consider in determining whether the bidder or contractor made Good Faith Efforts to obtain MWSBE participation to meet the Contract Goal. The factors prescribed below are not intended to be a mandatory checklist, nor is it intended to be exhaustive or exclusive. OBO may consider other factors or types of efforts that may be relevant in appropriate cases.

If a contractor fails to submit Good Faith Efforts documentation as provided in this Policy, it waives the right to appeal OBO decisions related to this Policy. OBO will review all the efforts made by the contractor, including the quality and quantity of those efforts.

### **Pre-Award.**

A bidder must submit a participation plan (Document 00470) to OBO at the time the bidder

submits the bid. If the participation by certified MWSBE subcontractors documented on the participation plan (“participation”) is less than the Contract Goal, a bidder should submit a Record of Good Faith Efforts (Document 00471) with the bid. A bidder should also submit a request for a deviation (Document 00472) if the bidder, having used Good Faith Efforts, reasonably believes that it cannot meet the Contract Goal or a commercially useful deviation.

In making a determination that the bidder has made a good faith effort to meet the Contract Goals, OBO shall consider specific documentation<sup>1</sup> concerning the steps taken to obtain MWSBE participation, with a consideration of, by way of illustration and not limitation, whether the bidder demonstrated a genuine effort to comply with the following factors.

1. Attended any pre-bid or pre-proposal meetings scheduled by the City Department;
2. Followed up with MWSBEs that attended the pre-bid or pre-proposal meetings to discuss subcontracting and supplier opportunities and contacted MWSBEs listed in the City’s online directory;
3. Conducted outreach with minority and women focused organizations and associations far in advance of solicitation due date (no less than 10 business days);
4. Identified and designated portions of the work to be performed by MWSBEs to increase the likelihood of meeting the Contract Goals (including where appropriate breaking down the contract into reasonably sized subcontracts to ensure participation);
5. Advertised subcontracting opportunities in news media focused towards minority and women persons far in advance of solicitation due date;
6. Provided MWSBEs with a point of contact that was knowledgeable about the project and possessed decision-making authority to answer questions from interested MWSBEs;
7. Provided a reasonable number of MWSBEs certified with timely written notices via email, mail, and/or fax and/or with documented contact regarding the subcontracting/supplier opportunities. A “reasonable number of MWSBEs” shall be based on the number of MWSBEs available in the directory;
8. Solicited the MWSBEs within a reasonable amount of time (no less than seven business days) before bid submission, as well as followed up with the MWSBEs solicited to determine if they were interested in submitting a bid or proposal or participating on a team.

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<sup>1</sup> A list of common supporting documentation that may allow Contractors to support their good faith efforts can be found on the Office of Business Opportunity website at [www.houstontx.gov/obo](http://www.houstontx.gov/obo).

9. Provided interested MWSBEs certified to perform the solicited work with prompt access to the plans, specifications, scope of work and requirements of the contract;
10. Negotiated in good faith with interested MWSBEs, and not rejecting MWSBEs as unqualified without sound reasons based on a thorough investigation of their capabilities;
11. Entered into a formal contract, or signing enforceable letters of intent with MWSBEs;
12. Provided an explanation to any MWSBE whose bid or price quotation is rejected, unless another MWSBE is accepted for the same work, as follows:
  - a. Where price competitiveness is not the reason for rejection, a written rejection notice including the reason for rejection will be sent to the rejected MWSBE firm;
  - b. Where price competitiveness is the reason for rejection, a meeting must be held with the price-rejected MWSBE, if requested, to discuss the rejection;
13. Made efforts to assist interested MWSBEs in obtaining bonding, lines of credit, insurance required for the contract, and documenting MWSBE denied by bona fide surety agents;
14. Ensured that the conditions and requirements for subcontracts are commensurate with industry standards and would not cause an economic hardship on MWSBEs, such as unnecessary insurance or coupling bid bonds with retainage;
15. Incorporated efforts not attempted earlier or on previous bids that appear more likely to lead to attaining the Contract Goal. Past performance on similar contracts with similar scopes will also be taken in consideration when determining Good Faith Efforts. A bidder that continues to make same efforts without any significant change in the level of participation may not be making Good Faith Efforts.

### **Post-Award.**

The contractor must sign the approved participation plan (Document 00470 or Document 00570) prior to starting work on the Project. A contractor should submit a request for deviation (Document 00572) from OBO if the contractor, having made Good Faith Efforts, reasonably believes that it will not achieve the Participation Plan Percentage documented in the approved participation plan. Unless OBO approves a deviation, a contractor must submit to OBO a Participation Summary (Document 00660) prior to City Council's consideration of any close-out, term extension, or change order. If participation is less than anticipated in the approved

participation plan, the contractor must submit a Record of Good Faith Efforts (Document 00571) along with the Participation Summary. A contractor that fails to submit a deviation request and Good Faith Efforts documentation waives the right to appeal OBO decisions related to this Policy.

If the contractor is awarded the contract and fails to achieve the established Participation Plan Percentage, the contractor must demonstrate to OBO its efforts to meet the Participation Plan Percentage and failure to do so based on circumstances that the contractor could not reasonably control. In determining whether the contractor made Good Faith Efforts to ensure full participation and achievement of the Participation Plan Percentage, OBO shall consider the following factors:

1. Whether the contractor designated an MWSBE liaison officer to administer the Contractor's MWSBE programs and to be responsible for maintenance of records of Good Faith Efforts.
2. Whether the contractor furnished prompt MWSBE Utilization Reports in a timely and accurate manner through the online Contract Monitoring System or via hard copy.
3. Whether the contractor responded to efforts to resolve disputes with MWSBEs, and genuinely attempted to resolve these issues.
4. Whether the contractor disclosed payment discrepancies timely and within the monthly reporting period;
5. Whether the contractor complied with the participation plan, unless the contractor received a deviation from the OBO Director and whether upon approval, the contractor made Good Faith Efforts to replace a removed MWSBE with another certified firm;
6. Whether the contractor furnished prompt written responses to written inquiries from the Director or any employee of OBO regarding the MWSBE's performance or information germane to the MWSBE's certification;
7. Whether the contractor ensured that at all times during the performance of any contract or subcontract the MWSBE firm is engaging in a commercially useful function as that term is defined in Chapter 15 of the City of Houston Code of Ordinances;
8. Whether the contractor provided the OBO information, or other material, that was factually accurate and free of material misrepresentation; and
9. Whether the contractor furnished prompt responses to requests for information, books and records needed to verify compliance from the department administering the Contract, the City Attorney and the City Controller;

10. Whether the contractor attended all meetings and mediation hearings as requested by the Director or his/her designee; and
11. How the contractor may be affected by change orders, with consideration given to the size of the change orders.

**Change Orders.**

The requirement to make Good Faith Efforts to achieve the approved Participation Plan Percentage is applicable to change orders. Contractors should make Good Faith Efforts to ensure that the Participation Plan Percentage remains substantially the same after the issuance of change orders. If a contractor cannot maintain substantially the same level of participation provided in the latest approved Participation Plan (Document 00470 or Document 00570) due to a change order, the contractor shall submit to the OBO Director and Contracting Department a Document 00571 (Post-Award Record of Good Faith Efforts) and Document 00572 (Post-Award Plan Deviation Request) in a timely manner that does not cause disruption to the project. In addition to other relevant factors, in evaluating whether Good Faith Efforts were made by the contractor to meet the Participation Plan Percentage despite change orders, the OBO Director shall consider the contractor's efforts to timely and efficiently deliver the project.

END OF DOCUMENT