

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the statewide Diversity Business Enterprise Program?

Tennessee general assembly enacted the state's diversity program in April 2004; several months after the signing of Executive order No. 14. The executive order established the Governor's Office of Diversity Business Enterprise to developed state regulations, policies and procedures for the program. Businesses must apply for certification and provide evidence of ownership and control by a minority, female, service-disabled veteran, persons with disabilities or small business enterprises as part of the diversity business certification process.

2. What is a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)?

A MBE means a minority business enterprise is a business that is a continuing, independent, for profit business which performs a commercially useful function and is at least 51% owned and controlled by one or more minority individuals who are impeded from normal entry into the economic mainstream because of past practices of discrimination based on race or ethnic background. A minority is generally defined as an individual who is African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, or Native American.

3. What is a Women Business Enterprise (WBE)?

A WBE means a woman owned business enterprise that is a continuing, independent, for profit business which performs a commercially useful function and is at least 51% owned and controlled by one or more women; or in the case of any publicly owned business, at least fifty-one percent (51%) of the stock of which is owned and controlled by one (1) or more women and whose management and daily business operations are under the control of one (1) or more women.

4. What is a Service-Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (SDVBE)

"Tennessee Service-Disabled Veteran owned business" mean any person who Served honorably on active duty in the armed forces of the United States with at least a twenty percent (20%) disability that is service-connected meaning that such disability was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval or air service.

Tennessee Service-Disabled owned Veteran means a service-disabled owned business that is a continuing, independent, for profit business located in the state of Tennessee that performs a commercially useful function, and:

(a) Is at least fifty-one percent (51%) owned and controlled by one (1) or more service-disabled veterans;

(b) In the case of a business solely owned by one (1) service-disabled veteran and such person's spouse, is at least fifty percent (50) owned and controlled by the service-disabled veteran; or

(c) In the case of any publicly owned business, at least fifty-one percent (51%) of the stock of which is owned and controlled by one (1) or more service-disabled veteran and whose management and daily business operations are under the control of one (1) or more service-disabled veteran.

5. What is a Small Business?

The Tennessee General Assembly expanded the definition of a Small Business that desires certification as a Small Business Enterprise (SBE). Public Chapter 1135 passed June 2010 and amended by Public Chapter 1098 effective July 2011 revised the definition of a Small Business Enterprise (SBE) with the following definition:

“Small business means a business a continuing, independent, for profit business which performs a commercially useful function with residence in Tennessee and has total gross receipts of no more than ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) averaged over a three-year period and employs no more than ninety-nine (99) persons on a full-time basis”.

Effective April 2, 2012, firms seeking eligibility in the state’s diversity business enterprise program for the small business certification may review the Certification Overview page of our web site for more details on how to qualify.

6. How can I qualify as a Disabled-owned Small Business (DSBE)?

Persons with disabilities may qualify as a Disabled-owned Small Business Enterprise (DSBE) by having their physician complete the Disability Affidavit indicating they have been diagnosed as having a physical or mental disability resulting in marked and severe functional limitations that is expected to last no less than twelve (12) months. Or if the individual is eligible to receive either of the following benefits:

- a. Is eligible to receive social security disability insurance (SSDI) or
- b. Is eligible to receive supplemental security income (SSI) and has a disability as defined in the first subdivision as listed above.

7. Is Service-Disabled Veteran-owned Business Enterprise (SDVBE) the same as Disabled-owned Small Business Enterprise?

No, to qualify, a Service-disabled Veteran-owned Business must have served honorably on active duty in the armed forces of the United States with at least a twenty percent (20%) disability that is service-connected meaning that such disability was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval or air service. Not so for “Persons with Disabilities”. Persons with a physical disability must provide an Affidavit of Disability signed by a licensed physician. See above #6 for a complete definition.

8. How do I register to become a certified business?

Please go to the link on our website www.tn.gov/diversity. This is an electronic registration that registers your company for certification with the Governor's Office of Diversity Business Enterprise. All applications must be submitted electronically. No documentation will be received unless submitted through the TN Go-DBE software system at:

<https://tn.diversitysoftware.com/FrontEnd/StartCertification.asp?TN=tn&XID=9810>

A "Documentation Checklist" checklist link is available (see "For Registration" tab) as a guide as to the type of required documentation that is required in order to complete the certification review process or click the following link to view:

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/generalservices/documents/cpo/godbe/Website%20Documentation%20Checklist%206-28-17.pdf>

9. Who should I call for assistance with registration questions?

Through our partnership with the department of General Services, Central Procurement Office we require business owners interested in certification to first register in "Edison" - the state of Tennessee's enterprise resource portal, to complete the registration application. This application serves several purposes:

1. To registration as an Edison Supplier
2. Increase the pool of available businesses to assist state agencies and departments in meeting their agency internal goals.
3. Contact Supplier Maintenance call 615.741.9745 with questions regarding the "Edison" registration process.
4. Submit Technical Support request concerning software issues to the service provider by clicking the Customer Support tab within the application.

10. Is there a difference between Registration and Certification?

Yes, there is a difference:

•**Registration:** Registration is the process following receipt of your registration. Your business will be eligible to compete for state purchasing and contracting opportunities. You will receive e-mail notification from "Edison" the state's Enterprise Resource portal once you have properly completed the Edison registration process. Registration for Tennessee bid/event opportunities is open to all businesses.

•**Certification:** is a process that requires a thorough investigation of a company’s ownership and control of the day to day operations, including, but not limited to; financial statements, by-laws, charter, stock certificates, lease agreements, salaries of owners, number of employees, license/authorities, etc. This process is open to minority owned, woman owned, service-disabled veteran owned persons with disabilities or small business enterprises. Applicants are required to submit the mandatory documentation needed to complete the certification review process. The certification review process verifies that the business owner has proven and met specific criteria to qualify for the diversity status of which they have applied.

11. Where can I register?

Registrations for certification is an electronic process. Please visit our web site at <https://tn.diversitysoftware.com/FrontEnd/StartCertification.asp?TN=tn&XID=9810> . Click “Apply For / Renew Certification” link on the left hand side of the screen.” All Documentation must be submitted electronically through the TN Diversity software system at:

<https://tn.diversitysoftware.com/vendorstart.asp>. Select “New Registration” and click “create account” for new applications with no current or existing certification. If certified with another organization using B2Gnow software, please click “Login” using your current Username and Password.

12. Do I need an appointment to get certified?

Appointments are encouraged. Knowledge of the required documents will help expedite the process. Although "walk-ins" are accepted, meetings with a Diversity Liaison without an appointment will be on a first-come first-served basis and behind scheduled appointments.

13. What documents or other important information do I need to provide for registration?

Please see the “Documentation Checklist” link as to the type of necessary documents. Required documents are to establish that the business owner meets with the ownership and control guidelines and status as a Diversity Business Enterprise, e.g.:

1. Birth Certificate, Driver's License
2. Articles of Incorporation, Partnership or Operating Agreement
3. State authorization to transact business - business licenses held
4. Tax Returns

Note: To complete the certification process, all requested documentation must be submitted. All applications received without all of the required documentation will be determined ineligible for certification with Go-DBE office. Once an applicant has been declined for certification the waiting period to reapply is three (3) years.

14. Do you provide loans and or grants for new businesses?

The Go-DBE office does not provide loans or grants to businesses. This office specifically works with assisting diversity businesses who have been in business for at least two (2) years to compete successfully with state's executive branch expenditures for products and/or services which may be bid competitively.

15. What are the advantages of becoming certified with Go-DBE?

Certification as a diversity business enterprise provides greater exposure for certified businesses to receive opportunities with the state of Tennessee. The names of all certified businesses appear in the Go-DBE electronic directory and are available on the Go-DBE web site for ALL state procurement officials to utilize when sourcing on the local agency level.

Departments and agencies will readily be able to identify businesses certified through Go-DBE program. The simplicity with identifying a certified diversity firm through the certification directory or through the state's procurement portal called "Edison" creates for an effective process by which procurement officials are better able to achieve their agency internal goals. The certification is free to all citizens of the State of Tennessee.

16. How soon after assessment am I able to submit a bid or proposal?

Businesses are able to submit electronic bids for Events in "Edison" the state's procurement portal or Request for Proposal (RFP) at any point throughout the certification review process.

Upon approval of your certification with the Go-DBE office your assigned Diversity Business Liaison may refer your firm to the appropriate state procurement entity responsible for purchasing the product and/or service you have designated interest. A properly identified UNSPSC code must be selected and entered into "Edison" at the time of registration. This same code is available through the TN Diversity Software system and should be the same or similar category.

Current bid opportunities are available through the Governor's Office of Diversity Business website by clicking on "Current Procurement Opportunities".

A connecting link entitled "Upcoming Procurement Opportunities of Acquisition Plans" is also available to view anticipated purchases in the fiscal year. The fiscal year is from July 1 to June 30 of the current year.

17. When will my certification expire?

Certifications issued by Go-DBE office are valid for a period of three (3) years from the date of issuance. For re-certification, please click the "Renew" link and click on "Login" to complete the electronic application for recertification and the "Affidavit of No Change". All documentation must be submitted electronically and attached to the TN Go-DBE Diversity software system at the time of renewal. The Go-DBE office is unable to accept and process hard copy documents.

18. I applied for a Federal Tax ID (FEIN) and I am waiting on the number. Can I use my Social Security Number to register and change it when I get my FEIN number?

Your Social Security Number may be used to register. Under the new Edison Enterprise Solution, it is recommended you use your FEIN for registration. You will be required to complete a new electronic application when you change from your SSN to your FEIN.

19. My firm is located in another state, am I eligible for certification with Tennessee?

All out of state businesses must submit evidence of an existing certification from their home state or recognized national certification in order to be eligible for certification in Tennessee. Certifications from approved authorities as listed on the Documents Checklist are also approved as reciprocal.

Self-certification with the U. S. Small Business Administration or any other type of self-certification is not acceptable as evidence of certification.

20. Help Starting a Business

Web sites that may provide you with helpful information on starting and operating a business:

Department of Economic & Community Development:

<https://www.tnsmartstart.com/>

Dept. of Revenue (On Line Business Registration):

<https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/revenue/e-file-and-pay/online-business-registration.html>

State Treasury

Small and Minority-Owned Business Assistance
Program (SMOB)

<http://www.treasury.state.tn.us/smob/index.html>