



Legal and Business Strategists
DBE Experts

DBE Certification Application Guide



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Introduction



By requesting this guide you have taken an important step on the road to becoming a government contractor and getting your fair share of the billions of dollars of government contracts solicited by Federal, State and Local Governments annually. The purpose of this Guide is to give you an overview of the Department of Transportation's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and Airport Concessions Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE) Certification Program. The guide is based on my experience as a government contracts attorney who specializes in preparing DBE and ACDBE Certification Applications and defending applicants when their (often self-prepared) applications are denied.

Once you've read and thought about the information contained in this guide, pick up the phone and call me at (786) 390-5709 to schedule a free half-hour consultation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JPH Cazeau', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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Disclaimer

This Guide is designed to be a source of helpful information for anyone considering applying for the DBE or ACDBE certifications. There are no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation warranties of fitness for a particular purpose.

Neither the publisher nor the author are in the business of providing legal advice or guidance to people with whom there is no signed fee agreement in place. No guarantee is made that you are eligible for the DBE or ACDBE programs or that you will be certified if you follow the information in this guide. It is always better to consult with a trained professional to discuss your specific situation.

What is the DBE Certification Program?

The Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and Airport Concessions Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE) programs are administered by the U.S Department of Transportation. For the purpose of this guide we will refer only to the DBE program. Although the two programs are very similar there are a few important distinctions. We will point those out later.

The purpose of the DBE Certification program is to remedy past and current discriminatory practices against certain groups of individuals in obtaining government contracts. The DBE Certification Program provides a level playing field so that members of these groups can bid on contracts that only businesses with a DBE Certification can bid on.

Companies who have obtained a DBE Certification are able to bid on contracts with the various highway agencies, airports, transit authorities and a number of other state agencies who receive funding from the Department of Transportation. These contracts are only available to companies who have obtained their DBE Certification.

The DBE Certification program is very useful to small businesses like yours because it gives you the opportunity to bid on contracts that are only available to companies who have received their DBE Certification. It also makes your company valuable to larger companies who need DBE companies to fulfill subcontracting goals on government contracts. These contracts can be worth anywhere from a few thousand dollars to several millions of dollars to your company.

The Different Types Of DBE Certification Service Providers.

If you found our law firm using an internet search engine, then you may know that there are not many other companies offering DBE certification application preparation services. Some of the companies that do offer preparation services are reputable and have spent a considerable amount of time assisting individuals and companies obtain admission to the DBE program. There are other companies which are not as reputable.

If you are thinking of retaining someone to assist you with your DBE application it's because you do not want to waste time preparing the application yourself, the process is too daunting or you here realized that the consequences of not getting it right the first time. We often hear from individuals who have been denied certification after applying on their own. In many cases, it is difficult if not impossible to assist them by the time they call us.

Any intelligent, organized person who takes his or her time should have no trouble completing the DBE application. However, if your company has any issues we discuss later in this guide please call us. If you are in any of those situations and you wish to save time and money it's just better not to try to attempt to prepare your DBE application yourself.

DBE Certification Requirements

In order to apply for certification as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), your firm must meet the following eligibility criteria stated in 49 CFR Part 26:

The disadvantaged individual must be a U.S. citizen (or resident alien) and be a member of a socially or economically disadvantaged group:

- a. African American
 - b. Hispanic American
 - c. Native American
 - d. Asian-Pacific American
 - e. Subcontinent-Asian American
 - f. Woman
 - g. Other certified as disadvantaged (an individual who is not a member of the groups listed above can still be certified as a DBE by establishing their socially disadvantaged status).
- The disadvantaged individual must have a personal net-worth (PNW) of less than \$1,320,000. Items excluded from a person's net worth calculation include an individual's ownership interest in the applicant firm, and his or her equity in their primary residence.
 - Up until June 2012, applicants for the ACDBE program were able to exclude other assets that the individual could document were necessary to obtain financing or a franchise agreement for the initiation or expansion of his or her ACDBE firm (or have in fact been encumbered to support existing financing for the individual's ACDBE business) to a maximum of \$3 million. However, in June 2012 that provision was removed when the Personal Net Worth cap for ACDBEs was increased from \$750,000 to \$1,320,000 to match the DBE program.
 - Depending upon the nature of work performed, a firm (including its affiliates) must not have average annual gross receipts over the firm's previous three fiscal years in excess of \$22,410,000 (\$52,470,000 for airport concessionaires in general with some exceptions). This size standard is for construction related work. Depending on the type of work the business performs, other lower size standards may apply.
 - The firm must be a for-profit small business where socially and economically disadvantaged DBE owner(s) own at least a 51% interest, and have managerial and operational control of the business operations; the firm must not be tied to another firm in such a way as to compromise its independence and control.

- The socially and economically DBE owner(s) must possess the power to direct or cause the direction to the management and policies of the firm and to make day-to-day, as well as long-term decisions on matters of management, policy and operations.
- If state or local law requires the persons to have a particular license or other credentials in order to own and/or control a certain type of firm, then the socially and economically disadvantaged persons who own and control a potential DBE firm of that type must possess the required license or credential. (This rule varies from state to state. For example, if your state allows someone else to qualify your business then you should be able to certify your firm without possessing the particular license or credential on your own).

The DBE application review process

Clients are often surprised when the DBE application they prepared themselves comes back denied. Often, denials can be prevented by understanding the DBE application process and what information is being reviewed and how that information will be used. Understand that there may be actions that you take as a business owner that, while good for business, may hurt your chances of getting DBE application approved.

The rules governing the DBE program place a burden on participants in the program to ensure that only socially and economically disadvantaged individuals take advantage of the program. Therefore, the primary objective of the DBE application review process is to determine whether a socially and economically disadvantaged individual, independently owns and controls the company.

The review of your DBE Application

The individual reviewing your DBE application must not only review your DBE application but dozens, if not hundreds of other DBE applications. The only way to perform this daunting task is to utilize checklists. For the most part, reviewers try very hard to maintain objectivity and not draw conclusions during the file review. However, reviewers are not necessarily attorneys or CPAs so complex business and financial arrangements that fall outside of the checklist can cause problems.

After receiving the DBE application packet, the information contained is reviewed and compared against a checklist. Particular attention is given to names appearing in the documents, since the same names may appear in different documents. Same names in different documents may indicate a relationship that affects the DBE applicant's control over the company.

Conflicting information raises questions that may be addressed at the on-site review. Comparing changes in financial position may provide an insight into problem areas dealing with managerial control. Reviewers will often create flow charts to track organizational changes and/or where the firm is connected with other firms by means of interlocking directors and/or officers.

Tracing dates through the DBE application is also an often used review technique. Conflicting dates and conflicting information can also raise questions at the on-site interview.

Information related to your DBE application that the reviewer considers:

1. **The firm must be a small business concern as defined by the Small Business Act and relevant regulations.** The reviewer will seek to determine whether your firm is a “small business” as defined by the SBA. For general contractors the limit is average annual gross receipts over \$17,420,000 over the prior three fiscal years. For engineering firms the limit is \$4 million and for specialty contractors the limit is \$7.5 million.
2. **The majority (51% or greater) owner(s) must be socially disadvantaged. This means:**
 - a. African American
 - b. Hispanic American
 - c. Native American
 - d. Asian-Pacific American
 - e. Subcontinent-Asian American
 - f. Woman
 - g. Others certified as disadvantaged
3. **The majority (51% or greater) owner(s) must be economically disadvantaged.** This means a personal net worth of less than \$1.32 million, excluding equity in one personal residence and the value of the DBE firm ownership.
4. **Control: The reviewer will closely scrutinize the applicant firm whose ownership or control has recently changed.** True control of the firm by the disadvantaged owner is critical to the certification process. Business entity control is divided into two segments:
 - a. **Operational Control:** The disadvantaged owner must be actively involved in all aspects of the business. The individual must show that basic decisions pertaining to the daily operations are made independently. The individuals seeking certification must demonstrate experience and technical competence in the field in which certification is sought. Firms that utilize a qualifier who is not the socially and economically disadvantaged owner need to pay particular attention to this requirement.
 - b. **Managerial Control:** The disadvantaged owner must have demonstrated ability to make independent and unilateral business decisions to guide the future and destiny of the business.
5. **Financial Data:** All financial items will be systematically reviewed and analyzed to determine the control of a business.
 - a. **Company Financial Statement:** A careful review of the financial statements will be used to determine possible intercompany transactions or loans/or loans payable which dilute the applicant’s effectiveness in controlling the business.
 - 1) The Balance Sheet shows:
 - a) Equipment account
 - b) Accounts payable
 - c) Notes payable

- d.) Capital stock account
 - e.) Notes and loans receivable from officers or stockholders
 - f.) Notes and loans payable to officers and stockholders
 - g.) Equipment loans
 - h.) Accrued expenses
- 2) Footnotes to the statements will be critically reviewed.
 - 3) Statement of changes in financial position
 - 4) The Income Statement shows:
 - a) Payments to subcontractors
 - b) Rent expense
 - c) Lease expense
 - d) Salaries

b. Licenses To Do Business: These are needed as proof that the applicant can legally do business in the state. The review will look at:

- 1) Type of licenses.
- 2) Dates that licenses expire.
- 3) Who holds the license?

c. Prior Two Years Federal Tax Returns: These documents will be used to compare information reported on the financial statements such as:

- 1) Salaries paid to officers.
- 2) Names of officers and amount of stock ownership.
- 3) Dividends paid.

d. Resumes' of Applicant: Resumes indicate the applicant's experience in a particular field of work. They can indicate the applicant's technical competence based on experience in the industry and the degree of operational and managerial control exercised by the principals. Reviewers will look for:

- 1) Previous employers, common to two or more principals of the company.
- 2) Present occupation.
- 3) Previous employers who subcontract work to or from the applicant's company.

e. Third-Party Agreements: Rent and lease agreements are reviewed to determine if the applicant's control of the company is limited and affected by a third party. Items of importance are:

- 1) What is the purpose of the agreement?
- 2) Who are the parties to the agreement?
- 3) What are the terms of the agreement?
- 4) Who benefits by the terms of the agreement?
- 5) Does the agreement contain any language or conditions that restrict the applicant's power to control the destiny of the company?

Tips To Avoid Being Denied Your DBE Certification.

A company desiring to obtain its DBE Certification should ensure that it doesn't make the following mistakes:

- Ensure that any transfer of stocks/shares or ownership does not coincide with the submission of your DBE application.
- Avoid transferring stock/shares/ownership as gifts or with no or little exchange of funds.
- If the socially and economically disadvantaged individual has no experience in line of business ensure that the socially and economically disadvantaged obtains formal training and or degrees or certifications in the line of business.
- Avoid giving previous employers substantial ownership interests in the DBE business.
- Any socially and economically disadvantaged individual who is still employed by a company in the same line of business as the DBE will be sure to receive extra scrutiny.
- If ownership of the company goes from a non-disadvantaged to a socially and economically disadvantaged it is preferable that the former owners do not remain with the company.
- Avoid discrepancies between Operating Agreement and Partnership Agreement, Articles of Incorporation, etc.
- When possible, ensure that the socially and economically disadvantaged individual lives in the same City as the principal place of business of the DBE Company.
- If you are socially and economically disadvantaged and your spouse is not, and you used funds from a joint account to start your business it is imperative that you prepare an agreement or contract where your non-disadvantaged spouse renounces any rights to your business. Failing to take this step will undoubtedly result in the denial of your application.

Avoid these simple mistakes and you can be well on your way to obtaining your DBE Certification. In the event that your certification is denied please give us a call. The DBE specialists at Kleiner & Cazeau can assist you in revising your application or handle the appeal of your denial.

What to do if your DBE Certification Application is Denied

My DBE Certification Application has been denied! Now what?

You've spent days, if not weeks and months, putting together your DBE certification application and now you've learned that your DBE application has been denied. Now what do you do?

First, read the letter you received from the certifying agency carefully. The reason for the denial should be clearly set forth in the letter you received. There are many reasons why your application could have been denied. Typically, denials fall into the following four categories.

1. You do not meet the eligibility requirements of the program such as, Business Size, Minority Status or Personal Net Worth.
2. You failed to show that you control the company.
3. You fail to show that you independently run the company.
4. You failed to cooperate by not providing requested documents.

Depending on the reason for your denial you may want to appeal the denial decision.

Filing an Appeal

Your administrative appeal with the Department of Transportation's Departmental Office of Civil Rights must be filed within 90 days from the date of denial. In some states, you may have the opportunity to appeal your case to a state entity, for example, in Florida its the Department of Administrative Hearings. Even if you appeal to an agency in your state, you still have the right to appeal to the DOT so long as your appeal is submitted before the 90 day deadline.

How to file an appeal after being denied DBE certification by a DOT recipient:

To file a DBE certification appeal, firms should send a letter to the U.S. Department of Transportation. The appeal should at a minimum include information and arguments concerning why the recipient's decision should be reversed, a copy of the denial letter, and any additional information you believe to be pertinent to the appeal. (Keep in mind, that stating you disagree with the statements in the denial letter is not an argument.)

Firms must also provide the name(s) and address(es) of any DOT recipient the firm is currently certified with; or who has rejected its application for certification; or removed the firm's eligibility within one year prior to the date of the appeal. This includes applications currently pending certification action.

All appeals should be submitted to:

U.S. Department of Transportation
Departmental Office of Civil Rights
External Civil Rights Programs Division (S-33)
1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20590
Phone: (202) 366-4754
TTY: (202) 366-9696
Fax: (202) 366-5575

Firms can file appeals on their behalf. However, we recommend that you retain an attorney who understands the rules and regulations governing the DBE program to represent you. Hiring an attorney who understands the requirements of the DBE program can be the most cost-effective decision you can make. At Kleiner & Cazeau, we understand the DBE program and its requirements because we regular assist clients in the preparation of their DBE applications. Since we understand the rules we know when an appeal should be taken and when in an appeal should not be taken.

We will review your denial letter and your application and determine whether the denial was justified. If denial was proper, we will determine whether an opportunity to be certified in the future is possible. If we don't think your firm meets the requirements of the program we will let you know so you don't unnecessarily expend time, energy, and financial resources towards obtaining certification. If we think you can be certified in the future, we will recommend ways to adjust your business so you can reapply when the time comes.

If denial was improper, we will review the case law and decisions to draft an appeal brief explaining why denial was improper and why the denial decision should be reversed or remanded.

When all else fails, it may be necessary to file suit to reverse the denial decision. In that case, our litigation department is well prepared to represent you in court. By hiring an attorney who understands the program we can ensure that a record is created that will help you win your case in court.

Alternatives To The DBE Certification.

Despite what some people will tell you, the DBE program is not for everyone. Many companies will attempt to sell their services to individuals and companies who are marginally qualified and sometime unqualified for the DBE program. Other times the individual or company is not involved in an industry that benefit from the DBE certification.

Fortunately, there are many other certifications besides the DBE certification. Which certification you ultimately decide to obtain depends on the industry you are in and the type of work you would like to obtain. For example, if you are a woman who owns and controls 51% her business, you may consider becoming certified as a Woman Owned Small Business (WOSB) or Economically Disadvantaged Woman Owned Small Business (EDWOSB). The federal government has mandated that 5% of all government contracts must go to women-owned small businesses.

Similarly, if you are a service disabled veteran or your business is located in an area designated as a Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) you may want to take advantage of the SBA's Service Disabled Veteran Owned Business (SDVOB) or HUBZone programs.

There are other state, local and private entities that will certify your company as a Small Business Enterprise (SBE), a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), a veteran owned business, woman-owned business etc. Each of the entities that administer those programs has their own process and rules for awarding certification.

The best certification for your company really depends on the industry in which your firm competes and the entity that you expect to purchase your product. For example, if you are a general contractor and you have no intention on bidding on government contracts there really is no point in getting your company certified as a DBE since this certification is meant to assist you in obtaining government contracts.

Similarly, getting your company certified by a private entity as a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) makes little sense if your goal is to obtain a government contract since most government entities do not accept private entity certifications.

The best way to get advice regarding which certification is best for your company is to talk to the various certification entities or to consult with a professional who understands the various programs.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the threshold for personal net worth?

Under the old rule, the threshold for each owner(s) was no greater than \$750,000. Only disadvantaged persons having a personal net worth (PNW) of less than \$750,000 could be considered as a potential qualified DBE. Items excluded from a person's net worth calculation include an individual's ownership interest in the applicant firm, and his or her equity in their primary residence.

In January 2011, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced a final rulemaking will adjust the personal net worth limit for DBE owners for inflation from the present \$750,000 to \$1.32 million. In June 2012, the personal net worth limit was also increased to \$1.32 million for ACDBE applicants.

Should I apply for DBE certification?

If your firm performs work or provides services that are used by government entities such as construction, professional engineering or architectural construction, trucking, manufacturing, fabricating etc. and meets the eligibility criteria of the program, then you should apply for DBE certification. Each entity that receives federal DOT funds are required to establish DBE goals for their projects. Prime contractors who bid on these projects must utilize DBE firms to meet those goals. You do not have to be DBE-certified to perform work on these contracts; however, opportunities increase if you are certified.

Am I eligible?

A firm (including its affiliates) must meet the requirements of the DBE program concerning group membership or individual disadvantage, business size, ownership and control. A firm must be at least 51 percent owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals who possess the power to direct or cause the direction of the management and policies of the firm and to make day-to-day, as well as long-term, decisions on matters of management, policy and operations.

As part of the application process you will be asked for documents to establish your eligibility. These documents include copies of your past three years business and personal tax returns, county and/or municipal occupational licenses or Business Tax Receipts, copies of any professional licenses, detailed resumes of all owners etc. The certifying agency will also conduct a site visit to your business.

The purpose of the document review and site visit is to ensure that your business is a bona fide company that is independently controlled by you.

How do I apply for DBE certification?

You must complete and submit a "Uniform Certification Application," plus all required/requested information to the certifying agency in your area.

Is there a cost to become certified?

No.

How long does it take to become certified?

The certification process usually takes approximately 90 days after receipt of the completed application and all supporting documentation. In some locations the process can take a lot longer. Submitting a complete application with all requested documentation will usually help decrease the processing time. Who can I call if I have questions regarding the processing of my application?

Your application is assigned to a certification analyst following its receipt and he/she can answer your questions.

How long does the certification period last?

Your DBE certification does not expire. Once your firm has been determined to be eligible the firm remains certified for a period of at least three years, unless and until its certification has been removed through the proper procedures. The Regulation does not say that recipients must recertify firms every

three years. You may not be asked to reapply for certification as a condition of continuing to participate in the program during this three-year period, unless the factual basis on which the certification was made changes.

The regulations do provide that a DBE must provide, every year on the anniversary of the date of its certification, a sworn affidavit affirming that there have been no changes in the firm's circumstances affecting its ability to meet size, disadvantaged status, ownership, or control requirements of this part or any material changes in the information provided in its application form, except for changes about which it has notified the recipient under paragraph (i) of this section. The affidavit shall specifically affirm that the firm continues to meet SBA business size criteria and the overall gross receipts cap of this part, documenting this affirmation with supporting documentation of the firm's size and gross receipts. If the firm fails to provide this affidavit in a timely manner, it will be deemed to have failed to cooperate and certification could be removed on those grounds.

Once I am certified, is my firm name listed in a directory?

Yes, each state is required to have a Unified Certification Program (UCP) that maintains a Unified Certification Directory (Directory). Once certified, your firm's name, address, contact information, work categories and work location preferences will appear in the Directory. This Directory is used by prime contractors, as well as other agencies and individuals, to provide a reference source for DBE firms to assist bidders and proposers in meeting DBE contract goals. Typically, counties and airports will also maintain their own list of DBE firms.

I have seen programs with the designations of MBE, WBE, SBE how are they different from one another?

MBE, FBE, WBE and PBE are acronyms for various state/county/local agency programs that provide contractual opportunities for disadvantaged, minority, female and woman-owned business enterprises. The acronyms are explained below:

- MBE – Minority Business Enterprises
- WBE – Woman-owned Business Enterprises
- SBE – Small Business Enterprises

Typically, these designations are race and ethnicity neutral meaning unlike the DBE certification there is no requirement that the owner of the company be a particular race or ethnicity. These designations are usually used in locally funded projects.

If my firm is SBA 8(a) certified, do I need to obtain DBE certification?

It depends. While similar in some respects, the Department of Transportation's DBE Program and the SBA's 8(a) programs are different. If your company intends to perform road construction or other infrastructure projects, then you should obtain DBE certification. Similarly, if your intent is to perform as a concessionaire at an airport, you should obtain ACDBE certification. Agencies that utilize DOT funding typically use the DBE and ACDBE certifications in their contract requirements, whereas other government agencies will use the 8(a) certification. One advantage to having the 8(a) certification when applying for DBE certification is that the process can often be expedited.

Checklist: Questions To Ask Your DBE Certification Consultant

1. How am I protected if my provider doesn't deliver?

The DBE certification preparation industry is unregulated. There are many reputable companies in the industry. But there are also unscrupulous individuals who are more than willing to take advantage of you. We hear from individuals all of the time who have paid thousands to have their application prepared and who received little or nothing in return. As members of the Florida and D.C. Bar Associations we are regulated and insured. We will not and cannot promise to provide a service that we can't deliver.

2. How will my confidential business and personal information be protected?

The preparation of your DBE application requires you to provide confidential information about you and your business. Who has access to that information? How is it stored? What safeguards are in place to safeguard your information? What recourse do you have if your information is lost or stolen? You need to have these questions answered before you hand over your confidential information to any consultant. We are first and foremost a law firm. We routinely handle our clients' most confidential matters every day. We have all of the insurance and other measures utilized by a typical law firm to ensure the safety of your confidential information. Moreover, at Kleiner & Cazeau, your application is prepared by an attorney. From the moment you speak to us the attorney-client privilege applies. We cannot divulge any information about you or your company to anyone without your approval. When your application is complete and you have been accepted into the program, all of your information including passwords and copies of documents are either returned to you or destroyed.

3. What happens if my application is denied and I need to file an appeal?

We cannot guarantee results. However, if we prepare your application and its denied we will handle your denial and/or appeal for a reduced fee or even free. This guarantee does not apply if your application is denied based on information you failed to provide to us at the time of application or you failed to follow our advice or directions.

4. Who will prepare the legal documents related to my DBE application?

If we determine during your application process that additional documents are required, we can prepare them. We do not supply you with generic forms for you to fill out.

We prepare your Bylaws, Operating Agreements, etc. not only to meet your business needs but to meet requirements of the DBE program. A non-lawyer should never prepare these important legal documents for you since they have legal implications beyond the DBE program. Certain documents within your DBE application should be completed by a lawyer. Beware of non lawyers who fill out your company's legal documents.

5. What happens after I receive my DBE certification?

Once you've obtained your DBE certification, we can continue to help you unlike most consultants. Most DBE consultants can only help you fill out your DBE certification. We are often retained by clients to assist them in preparation of bid documents, joint venture agreements, teaming agreements, mentor-protégé agreements, business development and other services.

Once we know and understand your business we will provide you with leads to government contracts, help your team with other clients and generally help you grow your business. Our goal is always to assist you in developing a successful and profitable business with the hope of continuing to provide you with legal services as your business grows.

6. What happens if you don't qualify for the DBE certification program?

Even if you don't qualify or are not prepared to apply for the DBE program, we are familiar with other federal, state, local and private programs for small, minority and women owned business that can help you grow your business.

7. What happens if you have problems after receiving your DBE certification?

Unfortunately, things can go wrong. We can represent you when they do. After you obtain your DBE certification you may become involved in a bid protest, debarment procedures, or size challenge. You may become aware of fraud by a competitor. In all of those instances, we can help.

What is your fee for preparing my DBE application?

This is usually the first question that we are asked when potential clients reach out to us. (Sometimes it's the only question!) We don't publish our rates online for a variety of reasons. The most obvious reason is that each client is different and each situation is different. A client who needs a two-year waiver, for example, is going to be billed more than a client who does not. We are available to consult with any potential client via email or telephone to discuss their particular situation. Consultations are usually 10 to 15 minutes. If we are asked to give advice about a client's particular situation or we run over the allotted time we ask for a small fee which is deducted from any fees when you retain us. To get an idea of what the preparation of a DBE application can cost you, search the internet. There are many companies who advertise their rates on the web. Just be careful. Often the fee quoted on the internet is not what you actually pay.

Recommended Resources

U.S. Department of Transportation: Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization

Information regarding the DBE program including links to the actual regulations can be found here.
<http://www.osdbu.dot.gov/DBEProgram/index.cfm>

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)

NAICS is the standard used by federal statistical agencies in classifying business establishments for the purpose of collecting, analyzing and publishing statistical data related to the U.S. business economy.
<https://www.census.gov/naics/>

Small Business Administration (SBA)

The SBA and its resource partners, including Small Business Development Centers, SCORE, Women's Business Centers and Veterans Business Outreach Centers, can provide technical, financial and contracting assistance to small businesses.
www.sba.gov

SBA Size Standards

This table lists small business size standards matched to industries described in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), as modified by the Office of Management and Budget in 2007.
sba.gov/sites/default/files/Size_Standards_Table.pdf