

GETTING STARTED WITH CERTIFICATION GUIDE

OVERVIEW

What is certification? Certification is a process where the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) reviews an application and supporting documents to ensure that the socially- and economically- disadvantaged business applicant owns, manages, and controls the day-to-day operations of a business.

ODI certifies the following types of businesses through the City of Columbus' certification program:

- Minority Business Enterprises (MBE)
- Women Business Enterprises (WBE)
- Emerging Business Enterprises (EBE)
- Veteran Business Enterprises (VBE)
- Small Local Business Enterprises (SLBE)
- LGBT Business Enterprises (LGBTBE)

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Fifty-one (51%) percent owned, managed, and controlled by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged, Veteran, and/or LGBT individual(s)

Must be a for-profit business that has been operating for a minimum of six (6) months

Must be a U.S. citizen

Must be registered with the Ohio Secretary of State and have all filings, licenses, permits, and authorities required by law to perform the scope of work

ELIGIBILITY BY PROGRAM: THE BUSINESS	MBE/ WBE	EBE	VBE	SLBE	LGBTBE
Is a business located in Columbus	✓		✓	✓	✓
Is a business located inside of Franklin County	✓		✓	✓	✓
Is a business located outside of Franklin County		✓	✓	✓	✓
Has 3-year average gross receipts of less than or equal to \$1 million and fewer than 25 employees				✓	

ELIGIBILITY BY PROGRAM: THE BUSINESS OWNER	MBE/ WBE	EBE	VBE	SLBE	LGBTE
Is a woman or minority (Black or African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic-American, Native-American)	✓	✓			
Is of any gender or race			✓	✓	✓
Personal net worth does not exceed \$750,000				✓	
Has a certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty			✓		
Has certification through the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce					✓

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What’s the cost of certification? City of Columbus certification is free.

How do I apply for certification? Visit columbus.diversitycompliance.com to apply. For the best user experience, use Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge.

How long does it take to get certified? Application review typically takes 30-90 days, depending on the number of pending applications in the system and the complexity of the request.

Does my certification have to be renewed? Yes, MBE / WBE / EBE / SLBE / LGBTBE certifications are valid for two calendar years from the date of initial certification. VBE certifications do not typically need to be recertified unless there is a structure change.

Is a City of Columbus certification accepted by other agencies? Yes, the City of Columbus recognizes MBE/WBE certifications from the State of Ohio, Women’s Business Enterprise National Council, and Ohio Minority Supplier Development Council through reciprocal agreements. Even if you’re certified with other agencies, you must still apply for certification with the City of Columbus. Using the reciprocal application may expedite the process.

What are participation goals and am I eligible? Participation goals ensure the involvement of minority and/or women-owned businesses on City contracts. These goals aim to address historical disparities and promote economic empowerment. **Only certified MBEs & WBEs are eligible for goals.**

BENEFITS OF CERTIFICATION

VISIBILITY

Increase your exposure and enhance credibility as a certified firm on our business directory

ACCESS

Make the most of your resources by accessing exclusive trainings and workshops for certified businesses

OPPORTUNITY

Obtain access to city contract bidding opportunities, particularly those with MBE/WBE participation goals

CONNECTIONS

Participate in networking events to foster collaboration, develop partnerships, and learn from industry leaders

NEXT STEPS

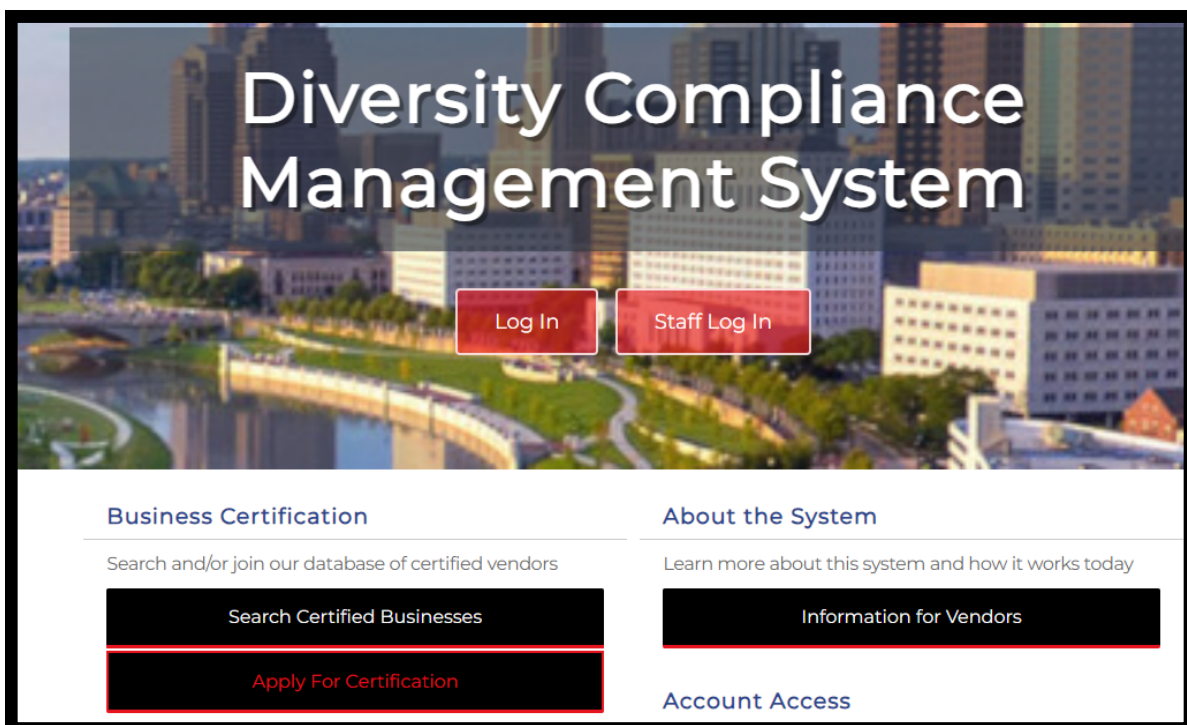
1. **Vendor Portal Registration:** All businesses must first register as a City of Columbus vendor. Visit <https://columbusvendorservices.powerappsportals.com> then click Sign Up. Tax ID/EIN and a copy of your W-9 form will be needed to complete your registration.



2. **Contract Compliance Report (EBO Questionnaire):** As a new vendor for the City of Columbus, you must complete the Contract Compliance EBO Questionnaire about your business during the registration process. You can access the questionnaire by logging into your account at: <https://columbusvendorservices.powerappsportals.com>

If you have questions, need password assistance, or wish to link commodity codes to your specific line of work, email vendorservices@columbus.gov or call (614) 645-8315.

3. **Certification Process:** Visit the Certification Overview page at columbus.diversitycompliance.com and click Apply for Certification to begin your application.



MANDATORY DOCUMENTS

- Copy of licenses required by City or State
- Resume of principal(s)
- Office rental or lease agreements
- Evidence of all outstanding loans
- Bank resolution/signature card
- Valid Photo ID of Principal(s)
- Business Capability Statement
- Birth certificate of minority principal(s) and/or woman principal(s)
- Company's last financial statement
- Individual Federal Taxes for the past three (3) years
- Business Federal Tax Returns from the last three (3) years, OR the full duration of operation if the business has operated for less than three (3) years
- Business Logo, Business Owner(s) Professional Headshot(s), or Team Photo

Additional documentation is required for the following business types:

CORPORATIONS:

- Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws
- Agreements containing options to purchase or otherwise acquire stock
- Shareholder guarantees for any debt
- Schedule of advances made to corporations by shareholders for the previous three (3) years
- Minutes of the first board or shareholders' meeting

LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY:

- Articles of Organization (Secretary of State Certificate)
- Operating Agreement

PARTNERSHIP (GENERAL OR LIMITED)

- Partnership Agreement

SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP:

- Copy of Assumed Name Certificate filed

- ! A document may be marked non-applicable and submitted only if the requested documentation does not apply to your business.
 - ! Once the application and all supporting documentation is submitted, an on-site visit will be scheduled.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion looks forward to helping you obtain certification!
Contact us at diversitycertifications@columbus.gov for more information.

