

STEP 1: RESEARCH AND EVALUATE

- Are you a controlling partner or primary decision maker for your business? It's important that you are the primary decision maker and that you're heavily involved in the day to day operations.
- Research federal and state programs, including the WBE, MBE, SBE and DBE requirements for your state. Connect with federal and state certification specialists to help you understand requirements and the process.
- Many of the documents will be connected to financial and legal documents. Sit down with your CPA, accounting firm, bookkeeper or bank to get support on what it will take to gather those documents.

STEP 2: APPLY

- Stay in touch with federal and/or state certification specialists to assist you with the process.
- Create cover letters that tell your story of involvement in the business, growing the business, and the critical role you fulfill. They do look beyond official documents in the decision-making process.
- Create separate folders for each certification and keep all involved documents organized.
- Submit your applications and expect a 1-3 month window for approval. Prepare for onsite interviews with the certification agencies.

HELPFUL RESOURCES AND TIPS

- Federal Level: To find out more about the federal certification requirements and take the pre-qualification questionnaire, visit www.certify.sba.gov.
- State Level: Visit www.ncsl.org for a list of which states have programs for WBE, MBE and SBE certifications and for links to their websites. You can also visit www.aptac-us.org/ to look up procurement consultants to walk you through the process and get you connected to local certifying agencies for free.
- Inclusion and Diversity Directors: Reach out to the inclusion and diversity directors at your Civil Rights Offices and also at local general contractors you desire to work with.
- To learn more about the business certification process from Missy, follow her on Instagram at @missyscherber and check out her blog www.thescherberreport.com.