

**1. Tell us about your position and role with Washington DC Water?**

As the Director of Enterprise Programs, I am part of a broad team that works to ensure that certified local, small, disadvantaged, and women owned businesses have equitable opportunities to participate as vendors, prime contractors, subcontractors and joint ventures on DC Water goods and services, construction, and architectural and engineering (A/E) contracts.

Moreover, the Compliance Team is responsible for assuring contractors are compliant (as applicable) with Davis Bacon and Related Acts, Service Contract Act, and DC Water's local hiring initiative, the so-called "Water Works" Program.

**2. What inspired you to pursue this line of work as opposed to other corporate areas?**

Let me say that I am extremely fortunate to be able to positively impact my community while working in the construction field.

I have been interested in construction as far back as I remember. My grandfather owned a small construction business in Atlanta, GA. Some of the fondest memories of childhood are spending summers working with my grandfather. And while it was exciting to see him working on a project, I was also developing an understanding of the challenges of small businesses - especially certified firms (securing contracts, making payroll, growing the firm, etc.

Although my professional career did not start in compliance and development, my interest started there.

**3. Tell us about DC Water's socially-economic inclusion program? Do you classify it as minority/women owned business enterprise, disadvantage business enterprise or supplier diversity and what is its origin or basis and how long has it been around? Do you substantiate it with an economic disparity study?**

The District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DC Water) is committed to promoting economic and business development in the District of Columbia and the region it services. DC Water provides water and wastewater treatment services to one of the most diverse cities and regions in the country. In carrying out its mission, DC Water seeks to reflect this diversity in meeting its business needs. As such, DC Water actively encourages and supports the participation of certified local business enterprises (LBEs), local small business enterprises (LSBEs), disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs), and women-owned business enterprises (WBEs) in its contracting and procurement activities.

To this end, DC Water will employ every reasonable effort to ensure that LBEs, LSBEs, DBEs and WBEs are afforded full and equitable opportunities to participate on DC Water projects.

Pursuant to requirements established as a condition for receipt of federal grants and federal financial assistance, DC Water also implements a program to encourage and facilitate participation by Minority Business Enterprises and Women-owned Business Enterprises (MBE/WBE) in accordance with the federal fair share objective. This program applies to DC Water's capital construction projects, where appropriate.

Consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court's *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña* decision, DC Water's Fair Share Program is not race based. Instead the Program focuses on firms that are owned by social and economically disadvantaged individuals, as well as women owned businesses.

There is a standing 32% MBE/ 6% WBE Goal for its federally funded Construction Projects; and a 28% MBE/ 4% WBE Goal for its A/E Projects. The goals are reviewed every three years through a triennial "availability analysis".

For its non-federal projects, DC Water encourages the participation and utilization of certified local and local small business enterprises (LBE/LSBE) through the application of preference points, which apply to competitive discretionary funded solicitations for goods and services and construction and A/E.

The preference provides for the utilization of additional points in the evaluation of proposals or and the utilization of a preference percentage reduction in price for bids. The preferences are as follows.

- Local=5 points
- Small=5 points

The maximum number of eligible preference points for a proposal is ten (10) points.

#### **4. What type of certifications do you accept?**

As the question suggests, DC Water does not certify firms. Instead, we rely on the accepts certifications of other agencies, depending on the compliance program involved.

To be recognized as a local and small firm for discretionary funded projects, a firm's principal office must be located within DC Water's User Jurisdiction (District of Columbia, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County) and certified as a Local, Small, or Disadvantaged Business Enterprise by one of the area Jurisdictions.

For federally funded projects, DC Water follows EPA's Fair Share Objective for Certified DBE firms. To participate as a certified firm under this program, the following certifying agencies are recognized:

- The Environmental Protection Agency;
- The Small Business Administration 8(a) Program;

- The Small Business Administration SDB Program;
- Any DBE program from a US Department of Transportation federal recipient (MDOT, DDOT, MWAA, etc.);
- Any other EPA approved MBE/WBE Certified Program

**5. Do you set annual spending goals for the entire corporation as well as individual project spending goals?**

Currently, DC Water does not have a project specific goal setting process. All applicable construction and engineering projects incorporate the same MBE/WBE utilization goals established by the availability analysis.

**6. Do you track payments to minority businesses from tier one and two vendors? If so, are they electronic?**

This is a fundamentally important question as it gets to the heart of true compliance. DC Water measures certified firm utilization by dollars paid, and not just by contracts awarded. This applies to certified subcontractors at all tiers. To that end, DC Water has a very thorough and robust monitoring program whereby each project has a compliance officer assigned to it who is responsible for tracking awards, invoices from, and payments to the certified business community.

Additionally, prime contractors complete a "Payment Verification Form", each time an invoice is submitted, and report the status of their certified subs. This information must be corroborated by the same subs in a separate "Subcontractor Verification Form".

The data from the forms are captured by the compliance officer in an electronic database.

**7. Tell us if you get involved in payment disputes between majority and minority owned contracted businesses?**

Yes. DC Water's Compliance Program was established to ensure that certified firms are actually performing and paid for the work they were contracted to do. To that end, certified firms can contact the Compliance Program for support.

**8. Do you have procedures in place that deals with disputes between those parties and what if a first tier wants to terminate a minority owned vendor, do they have to report that to you prior to making the move?**

Yes. Certified firms cannot be removed from a project without first obtaining approval from DC Water.

When a substitution is requested, the first-tier contractor must submit its request and explain why substitution is needed. The impacted D/WBE subcontractor is also given the opportunity to submit a written objection to the proposed substitution, the contractor will notify, in writing, the D/WBE subcontractor regarding the proposed substitution.

In such instances, if DC Water agrees to the substitution, the contractor will need to exercise “good faith efforts” to identify another certified firm as a replacement.

**9. How do you deal with a first-tier vendor that seeks a waiver or does not meet their pledge to utilize a minority owned firm?**

DC Water does not have a waiver provision.

**10. What areas within your total corporate spend are covered under your minority spending program, like, construction, professional services, commodity and so forth?**

DC Water’s M/WBE program extends to any project funded or identified as “eligible” for funding by the EPA. This will generally extend to construction and architectural/engineering projects.

**11. How does one get registered or connected to do business with you?**

Last May, DC Water launched a new e-Procurement tool and supplier portal, “Zycus Supplier Network” (ZSN), to post solicitations, receive proposals, and make awards. Firms interested in doing business with DC Water will need to register with DC Water’s vendor portal.

To register, firms will need to complete the following:

Step 1: Go to [www.dewater.com/procurement](http://www.dewater.com/procurement) and click on “New Vendor Portal” to start the process;

Step 2: Activate the account and complete profile. After registering, firms will receive an e-mail notification prompting them to activate their account and complete their company profile. Please note that firms can select up to 7 categories of goods and services that relate to their company. Firms will receive automatic invitations when a new solicitation is issued for the related categories.

More information can be found at: [www.dewater.com/procurement](http://www.dewater.com/procurement).

**12. How does one find out about new procurement opportunities coming out from DC Water?**

For opportunities directly with DC Water, firms can visit DC Water’s website: [dewater.com/procurement](http://dewater.com/procurement). Also, as previously indicated, through the ZSN portal, firms can receive automatic notification of opportunities.

Moreover, DC Water also has an active outreach program. To ensure that all potential vendors and contractors have equal opportunity to compete and participate in contracting and procurement activities, DC Water’s outreach measures include:

- a. Targeted Advertisement to the local and small business community;
- b. Sponsoring and participating in procurement fairs;
- c. Project Specific workshops for large and specialized projects; and

e. Vendor Days and Business Lunch and Learns.

For eligible subcontracting opportunities, DC Water requires bidding primes to follow the EPA's Good Faith Efforts in outreaching to the certified business community.

As a matter of compliance, bidders are required to submit with the bid, their documentation of the good faith efforts. The documentation, must include, but not be limited to, email logs, phone logs, electronic searches and communication, handouts, flyers or similar documentation reflecting outreach to EPA recognized MBEs and WBEs that were solicited as potential subcontracting sources.

**13. What charges you up everyday to meet the challenges of your work?**

It's actually quite simple - when we do our jobs right, people eat. Having a true understanding of the impact that we can have on a business getting an opportunity, a person getting a job, or someone getting paid for the work they performed is an incredible motivation to complete our work.