

Exclusive Interview with Korey R. Gray, Director of Compliance and Business Development, DC Water



1. Tell us about DC Water’s Minority Business Enterprise Program and how does one get certified or qualified to do business with you as such a firm?

Recently, DC Water’s Board of Directors approved the revised Business Development Plan, an effort that was a result of two years of robust public engagement with a variety of external and internal stakeholders, such as the certified business community, prime contractors, government agencies and advocacy groups such as the Md. Washington Minority Contractors Association (MWMCA). One of the key revisions within the Plan is the establishment of the Disadvantaged/ Women-owned Business Enterprise (DBE/WBE) Program. This program applies to non-federally assisted projects over \$1 million. One of the goals of the program is to increase business opportunities for certified firms to compete and win DC Water contracts.

The Minority- and Women Business Enterprise Program is administered through DC Water’s Fair Share Objective Program, which applies to the Authority’s U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) -assisted or eligible projects.

DC Water does not certify firms. Instead, we rely on the certifications of other agencies, depending on the compliance program involved. For example, the eligibility criteria for the Certified Local and Local Small Business Enterprise Program, requires that a firm's principal office must be located within DC Water's User Jurisdiction: the District of Columbia, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County). Further, eligible program participants must have a current certification as a local or local small business enterprise by one of the following jurisdictions:

- District of Columbia’s “Certified Business Enterprise Program”;
- Montgomery County’s “Minority, Female and Disabled Business Enterprise” Certification Program;
- Montgomery County’s “Local Small Business Reserve” Program;
- Prince George’s County’s “County Based Business Certification” Program;
- Virginia Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity’s “Small, Women and Minority Owned Business” Program as accepted by Fairfax and Loudoun Counties;
- Maryland Department of Transportation’s “Small and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Certification” Programs for firms principally located in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties; and
- Other certification programs recognized by the District of Columbia or a DC Water user jurisdiction and meets the District of Columbia’s or user jurisdiction’s criteria for local and local and small business enterprise.

Further, to participate as a certified firm under the Fair Share Objective program, the following certifying agencies are recognized:

- The Environmental Protection Agency;

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- The Small Business Administration 8(a) Program;
- The Small Business Administration Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) Program;
- Any state Department of Transportation's "Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)" Certification;
- Indian Tribal Government, State Government, local Government or independent private organization in accordance with EPA's 8% or 10% statute as applicable as long as the certification meets EPA's U.S. citizenship requirement; and
- Any EPA approved MBE or WBE program.

For firms interested in participating in the new DBE/WBE Program, certifications from the following agencies are recognized:

- The United States Small Business Administration's "8(a) Business Development" Program;
- The United States Small Business Administration's Small Disadvantaged Business Certification;
- Any state Department of Transportation's DBE Certification;
- The District of Columbia Department of Small and Local Business Development's "Local Small Business Enterprise Certification";
- Any other government or independent private organization that maintains a "Disadvantaged Business Enterprise" certification; and
- Any government or independent private organization that maintains a "Women Business Enterprise" certification.

What types of commercial liability insurance is needed and do you require surety bonding coverage as well?

Insurance requirements are determined and based on the scope of work for each construction contract. In general, any contract that requires contractor enrollment into DC Water's Rolling Owner's Insurance Program (ROCIP) includes worker's compensation and employer's liability insurance, commercial general liability insurance, and excess liability insurance. Additional insurance requirements may be required (i.e. auto, additional commercial general liability) depending on the scope and location of the work. This information is explicitly spelled out in the project specific documents. Surety bonds are required in the form of payment and performance bonds.

2. What areas within the entire corporation has spending goals placed on them? Like construction, professional services, IT, and such?

For DC Water's Fair Share Objectives, 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".

In the initial years of the DBE/WBE Program, the existing Fair Share Objective overall goals will be in place, with the use of project specific goals for construction, architectural and engineering as well as goods and services procurements over \$1,000,000.

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3. How is the Water/Wastewater utility holding up during this worldwide COVID-19 Pandemic? Were you forced to shutter down any projects?

Yes, commercial utilization decreased during the pandemic, which forced us to take a hard look at expenditures, where we had to place some projects on hold or cancel them altogether. However, DC Water is open for business and there are competitive opportunities available. We will share those opportunities with MWMCA members.

4. I heard through the grapevine that senior management is considering an apprentice training program later this year for local individuals considering the trades. What's the status on that?

In September 2019, DC Water enrolled 14 District residents into the Apprenticeship Program. Participants in the Apprenticeship Program are enrolled in one of five (5) trade areas: Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC); Plumbing; Quality Assurance (Fleet Maintenance); Utility Services; and Wastewater Treatment Operator. The apprentices are fully engaged in the program which is comprised of on-the-job learning and related classroom instruction. The apprentices are our future workforce and we have dedicated staff who are unselfishly serving as mentors to the participants.

5. How can one track new projects coming out and be prepared to response?

Firms interested in partnering with DC Water are strongly encouraged visit our website and register in the Vendor Portal to receive up-to-date information on current solicitations. Members are welcomed to visit the website at <https://www.dewater.com/procurement>.

Additionally, we conduct virtual Vendor Days which are one-on-one orientations for firms interested in partnering with us. Participants are introduced to DC Water's procurement process, and are provided with an overview of current solicitations that match their business model.

Further, strategic partners such as the MWMCA receive notices of upcoming business opportunities, outreach events and other DC Water programming targeted to our diverse suppliers. We value our strategic partners in our collective effort to increase business opportunities for our certified firms.

 [BACK](#)