

Buncombe County Government Minority Business Plan

It is the policy of Buncombe County to: (1) provide minorities equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of County contracting and purchasing programs, including but not limited to, participation in procurement contracts for equipment, professional and other services contracts, and construction contracts; (2) prohibit discrimination against any person or business in pursuit of these opportunities on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin, and to conduct its contracting and purchasing programs so as to prevent any discrimination and to resolve all claims of such discrimination.

Buncombe County will actively seek to identify qualified minority businesses and offer them an opportunity to participate as providers of goods and services to the County. It is the intent of this plan to widen opportunities for participation, increase competition and to ensure the proper and diligent use of public funds.

This policy is not intended in any manner to require that contracts be awarded to anyone other than the lowest responsible bidder, not to supersede the requirement of any federal, state or local laws and rules, regulations and policies adopted pursuant thereto.

Buncombe County has a current verifiable goal of twelve percent (12%) for minority participation on building construction or repair projects, ten percent (10%) each for procurement, and services.

DEFINITIONS

1. Minority - a person who is a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States and who is:
 - a. Black, that is, a person having origins in any of the black racial groups in Africa;
 - b. Hispanic, that is, a person of Spanish or Portuguese culture with origins in Mexico, South or Central America, or the Caribbean Islands, regardless of race;
 - c. Asian American, that is, a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia and Asia, the Indian subcontinent, the Pacific Islands;
 - d. American Indian, that is, a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America; or
 - e. Female
2. Minority Business (MBE) - means a business:
 - a. In which at least fifty-one percent (51%) is owned by one or more minority persons, or in the case of a corporation, in which at least fifty-one percent (51%) of the stock is owned by one or more minority persons or socially and economically disadvantaged individuals; and
 - b. Of which the management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more of the minority persons or socially and economically disadvantaged individuals who own it.
3. Socially and economically disadvantaged individual - means the same as defined in 15 U.S.C. 637: Socially disadvantaged individuals are those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias because of their identity as a member of a group without regard to their

individual qualities. Economically disadvantaged individuals are those socially disadvantaged individuals whose ability to compete in the free enterprise system has been impaired due to diminished capital and credit opportunities as compared to others in the same business area who are not socially disadvantaged.

MINORITY OUTREACH PLAN AND GUIDELINES

Buncombe County will employ the following strategies to encourage participation from MBEs.

1. Work with minority-focused and small business groups that support MBE inclusion in the solicitation of bids.
2. Place emphasis on the importance of soliciting certified MBE firms for subcontracting opportunities at pre-bid conferences and in the bid documents. Examine specifications to identify special subcontracting opportunities and strongly encourage prime contractors to solicit bids for subcontracts from MBE firms.
3. Provide detailed information to majority contractors concerning the bidding and good faith efforts requirements by holding meetings with the contractors.
4. Assess the effectiveness of the MBE program, and identify opportunities to enhance it by evaluating MBE participation and compliance and reviewing the good faith efforts provided in bid packages.
5. Identify subcontracting opportunities unique to each construction contract and project and concentrate heavily on targeting certified MBE firms that have expressed an interest in Buncombe County projects. Identify these opportunities and contact interested businesses no later than 10 days prior to the bid opening and provide a list of prime contractors who plan to participate in the project.
6. Build new and strengthen existing business relationships through networking. Continue communicating with other North Carolina public agencies to find out how their MBE outreach programs are working and to share "best practices" and ideas to improve programs.
7. Participate in educational opportunities throughout the community as they become available and offer training sessions to share Buncombe County's outreach plan with interested businesses and organizations.
8. Be visible through participation in trade shows and business organizations of interest to MBE firms, majority contractors, and small businesses, and provide information to the general public about the MBE program, and continue outreach efforts to the business community.
9. Enhance Buncombe County's web page by including the outreach plan and guidelines, listing good faith efforts, creating links to MBE resources, and creating awareness of specific subcontracting opportunities.
10. Advertise upcoming bid opportunities in minority-focused media.
11. Work with architects and engineers to make subcontracting opportunities more noticeable and more easily understood by potential contractors and subcontractors.

Certification

Buncombe County requires certification for minority, disadvantaged or women-owned businesses. Any business that desires to participate as an MBE will be required to complete and submit for certification, documents required by any of the agencies listed below. Only those firms holding current certification through at least one of the following agencies will be considered eligible for inclusion in meeting the MBE participation percentage goals:

North Carolina Department of Administration Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) certification

North Carolina Department of Transportation Minority/Disadvantaged/Women-owned Business certification

Small Business Administration 8(a) certification

Other governmental agencies on a case-by-case basis

MINIMUM COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

All written statements or affidavits made by the bidder shall become a part of the agreement between the Contractor and Buncombe County for performance of the contract. Failure to comply with any of these statements, affidavits, or with the minority business guidelines shall constitute a breach of the contract. A finding by Buncombe County that any information submitted either prior to award of the contract or during the performance of the contract is inaccurate, false, or incomplete shall also constitute a breach of the contract. Any such breach may result in termination of the contract in accordance with the termination provisions contained in the contract. It shall be solely at the option of Buncombe County whether to terminate the contract for breach.

In determining whether a contractor for construction projects has made good faith efforts, Buncombe County will evaluate all efforts made by the Contractor and will determine compliance in regard to quantity, diligence, and results of these efforts. Contractors are required to earn at least 50 points for good faith efforts. Failure to file a required affidavit or documentation demonstrating that the contractor made the required good faith effort, is grounds for rejection of the bid. Good faith efforts include:

1. Contacting minority businesses that reasonably could have been expected to submit a quote and that were known to the contractor or available on State or local government maintained lists at least 10 days before the bid or proposal date and notifying them of the nature and scope of the work to be performed. (10 pts.)
2. Making the construction plans, specifications, and requirements available for review by prospective minority businesses, or providing these documents to them at least 10 days before the bid or proposals are due. (10 pts.)
3. Breaking down or combining elements of work into economically feasible units to facilitate minority participation. (15 pts.)

4. Working with minority trade, community, or contractor organizations identified by the Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses and included in the bid documents that provide assistance in recruitment of minority businesses. (10 pts.)
5. Attending any pre-bid meetings scheduled by the public owner. (10 pts.)
6. Providing assistance in getting required bonding or insurance or providing alternatives to bonding or insurance for subcontractors. (20 pts.)
7. Negotiating in good faith with interested minority businesses and not rejecting them as unqualified without sound reasons based on their capabilities. Reasons for rejection of a minority business based on lack of qualification should be documented in writing. (15 points)
8. Providing assistance to an otherwise qualified minority business in need of equipment, loan capital, lines of credit, or joint pay agreements to secure loans, supplies, or letters of credit, including waiving credit that is ordinarily required. Assisting minority businesses in obtaining the same unit pricing with the bidder's suppliers in order to help minority businesses in establishing credit. (25 pts.)
9. Negotiating joint venture and partnership arrangements with minority businesses in order to increase opportunities for minority business participation on a public construction or repair project when possible. (20 pts.)
10. Providing quick pay agreements and policies to enable minority contractors and suppliers to meet cash flow demands. (20 pts.)