**What is a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise?**

In broad strokes, a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) is a for-profit small business concern that meets these criteria:

▪ It is at least 51 percent owned by one or more individuals who are both socially and economically disadvantaged or, in the case of a corporation, in which 51 percent of the stock is owned by one or more such individuals

▪ Its management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more of the socially and economically disadvantaged individuals who own it.

Here’s a nice video from U.S. DOT on the DBE Program:

[*https://www.transportation.gov/civil-rights/disadvantaged-business-enterprise*](https://www.transportation.gov/civil-rights/disadvantaged-business-enterprise)

**What is a "Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Individual" under the DBE program?**

An individual is considered both socially and economically disadvantaged if he or she is a citizen, or lawfully admitted permanent resident of the United States, **and** fits into one of the following categories:

▪ Black American

▪ Hispanic American

▪ Native American

▪ Asian-Pacific American

▪ Subcontinent Asian American

▪ Woman

▪ A member of any additional group that is designated as socially and economically disadvantaged by the Small Business Administration

Additionally, an individual may demonstrate that he or she is socially and economically disadvantaged on a case-by-case basis.

To be recognized as a DBE firm for purposes of the DBE Program, it is not enough for your firm to simply match the description of a DBE firm provided above. It is very important be *certified* as a DBE by your state’s Unified Certification Program (UCP). Each state has its own UCP.

**Why should my company become a certified DBE?**

Why get certified? The short answer is: more business opportunities as prime contractors seek to to meet their DBE participation goal requirements. And to help you make contact with these opportunities, DBE certified firms are listed in official directories, which can be very useful to contracting companies.

Paratransit Services, for example, uses these directories extensively when searching for DBE firms in the states where we operate: California (Caltrans UCP web application), Oregon (Certified Vendor Directory) and Washington (Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises Directory). It can be very helpful to the contactor, as well as for the DBE firms, for the firms to be listed in these directories!

**How Do I become DBE Certified?**

Each state has its own Unified Certification Program. We list the states in which Paratransit Services operates.

▪ *California*. For California, where we operate transit systems in the Counties of Lassen, Tehama, Glenn, Lake, Calaveras, and Nevada, a good place to get started with the DBE Certification process is the Office of Business and Economic Activity:

[*https://dot.ca.gov/programs/business-and-economic-opportunity/dbe-certification-information*](https://dot.ca.gov/programs/business-and-economic-opportunity/dbe-certification-information)

▪ *Oregon*. In Oregon, where we operate public transit systems in Bend and Medford, the State offers an e-application process:

[*http://www.oregon4biz.com/How-We-Can-Help/COBID/DBE/*](http://www.oregon4biz.com/How-We-Can-Help/COBID/DBE/)

▪ *Washington State*. In Washington, where Paratransit Services operates a transit system in Cowlitz County, firms may apply for DBE Certification through the Washington State Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises:

[*https://omwbe.wa.gov/certification*](https://omwbe.wa.gov/certification)

**We Encourage DBE Participation**

As a nonprofit company that has been built on the mission of helping people who are economically or physically disadvantaged with their transportation needs, Paratransit Services fully supports the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program. We will soon be celebrating our 40th year in business, and we have always been true to our original, underlying belief that everyone should be included as we move forward as a country. When we purchase goods or services from vendors in support of our public transit contracts, we do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex.

Paratransit Services operates public transit systems in Northern California, Oregon, and Washington, and we rely on regional vendors to provide products and services in support of these systems. We encourage the participation of DBE firms in these transit operations.

**Contact Paratransit Services**

For more information about procurement opportunities with Paratransit Services at a specific location mentioned above where we currently operate, please send an e-mail to Paratransit Services DBE Liaison Jeff Lozensky: [jel@paratransit.net](mailto:jel@paratransit.net). Please indicate “DBE Inquiry” in the subject line.