

REGULATIONS GOVERNING PARTICIPATION BY MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISES
IN STATE FUNDED AND DIRECTED PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS,
CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS AND PROCUREMENT CONTRACTS FOR GOODS AND
SERVICES

I. **GENERAL**

1. **Purpose**

(a) The purpose of these regulations is to carry out the state's policy of supporting the fullest possible participation of firms owned and controlled by minorities and women (MBEs) in state-funded and directed public construction programs and projects and in state purchases of goods and services. This includes assisting MBEs throughout the life of contracts in which they participate.

(b) These regulations implement, in part, R. I. Gen. Laws, Chapter 37-14.1. These regulations are effective immediately and supersede all Department of Administration regulations issued previously under these authorities insofar as such regulations affect minority business enterprise matters in the State.

2. **Applicability**

These regulations apply to any construction project, construction contract or procurement contract for goods and services funded in whole or in part by state funds, or funds which, in accordance with federal grant or otherwise, the state expends or administers or in which the state is a signatory. Quasi-independent state agencies, such as the Rhode Island Public Buildings Authority, the Narragansett Bay Commission and the Rhode Island Port Authority, are subject to the requirements outlined under these regulations. With respect to Department of Transportation contracts, The Director of Transportation may promulgate regulations consistent with R. I. Gen. Laws Sections 37-14.1-8 and 37-14.1-9, thereby exempting Department of Transportation contracts from the requirements of these regulations.

3. **Definitions**

The terms "building" or "work" means construction activity as distinguished from manufacturing, furnishing of materials, or servicing and maintenance work. The terms include, without limitation, buildings, structures, and improvement of all types, such as bridges, dams, plants, highways, parkways, streets, subways, tunnels, sewers, mains, power lines, pumping stations, railways, airports, terminals,

docks, piers, wharves, ways lighthouses, buoys, jetties, breakwaters, levees, and canals; dredging, shoring, scaffolding, drilling, blasting, excavating, clearing and landscaping. Unless conducted in connection with and at the site of such a building or work as described in the foregoing sentence, the manufacture or furnishing of materials, articles, supplies, or equipment (whether or not a Federal or State agency acquires title to such materials, articles, supplies, or equipment during the course of the manufacture or furnishing, or owns the materials from which they are manufactured or furnished) is not a "building" or "work" within the meaning of these regulations.

"Compliance" means the conditions existing when a prime contractor has met and implemented the requirements of these regulations.

"Construction" means all types of on-site work done on a particular building or work, including, without limitation, altering, remodeling, painting and decorating, the transporting of materials and supplies to or from the building or work by the employees of the construction contractor or construction subcontractor, and the manufacturing or furnishing of materials, articles, supplies, or equipment on the site of the building or work, by persons employed at the site by the contractor or subcontractor.

"Construction Project" means a contract or group of contracts for construction work that a prime contractor has agreed to perform, whether directly or through the use of subcontractors.

"Contract" means a mutually binding legal relationship or any modification thereof obligating the seller to furnish supplies or services, including construction, and the buyer to pay for them. For purposes of these regulations, a lease is a contract.

"Contractor" means one who participates, through a contract or subcontract, in any program covered by these regulations and includes lessees.

"Director" means the Director of the Department of Administration or any person whom he/she has designated to act for him/her.

"Goods" means materials or supplies of any kind provided by a vendor, his agents or employees.

"Services" means professional or non-professional activities requiring mental or physical labor to be performed by the contractor, vendor, his agents or employees.

"Minority" means a person who is a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States and who is:

- (a) Black (a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa);
- (b) Hispanic (a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other

Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race);

(c) Portuguese (a person of Portuguese, Brazilian or other Portuguese culture or origin, regardless of race);

(d) Asian American (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, South East Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands);

(e) American Indian and Alaskan Native (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America); or

(f) Members of other groups or other individuals found to be economically and socially disadvantaged by the Small Business Administration under Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act, as amended (15 U.S.C. 637 (a)).

"Minority Business Enterprise" or "MBE" means a small business concern as defined pursuant to Section 3 of the Federal Small Business Act and implementing regulations, which is owned and controlled by one (1) or more minorities or women and which has been certified as a Minority Business Enterprise under these regulations by the Rhode Island Department of Administration. For the purposes of these regulations, an owned and controlled business means one:

(a) which is at least 51% owned by one (1) or more minorities or women or, in the case of a publicly owned business, at least fifty-one percent (51%) of the stock of which is owned by one (1) or more minorities or women; and

(b) whose management and daily business operations are controlled by one (1) or more such individuals.

"MBE Coordinator" means the official designated to have overall responsibility for promotion of minority business enterprises within each department and agency for each contract covered by these regulations. He or she shall be appointed not later than the time the Request for Proposal for each contract is submitted.

"Non-compliance" means the condition existing when a contractor has failed to implement the requirements of these regulations.

"Prime Contractor" means the contractor that is charged with total construction on a contract or group of contracts, portions of which are, or will be subcontracted to their parties.

"Specialty Contractor" means a contractor charged with total construction on a contract or group of contracts, portions of which will not be subcontracted to third parties.

"Vendor" means the party with which the State contracts to provide goods or services.

4. Policy

These regulations shall be construed in accordance with the policy of the State of Rhode Island that minority business enterprises (MBEs) shall have the maximum opportunity to participate in the performance of projects or provision of goods or services outlined hereunder.

5. Construction Contracts

(a) MBE Liaison Officer

The chief executive officer of each prime contractor shall designate an MBE Liaison Officer who will coordinate with the MBE Coordinator from the Department of Administration or other state department or agency responsible for monitoring the contract.

(b) Ten Percent (10%) Requirement

(i) Each Department shall structure its procedures for procuring construction contracts to attempt to achieve the result that a minimum of ten (10%) percent of the total dollar value of these procurements is made directly or indirectly from MBEs. This result shall be achieved through one of the two methods described in paragraphs 5(b) (ii) or 5 (b) (iii) below.

(ii) Prime Contractor Method. Each prime contractor shall ensure that a minimum of ten percent (10%) of the dollar value of work to be performed on a construction project will be performed by MBEs. The prime contractor must meet or exceed this requirement or demonstrate that it could not meet this requirement despite its good-faith efforts. A prime contractor that is an MBE will satisfy the ten percent (10%) requirement by ensuring that a least ten percent (10%) of the dollar volume of work performed under the contract is performed by its employees.

(iii) Construction Contracts not involving the use of prime contractors. In lieu of using the prime contractor method described in paragraph 5(b) (ii) above, a Department may meet the ten percent (10%) requirement under these regulations by ensuring that ten percent (10%) of the dollar value of construction contracts in the aggregate for each fiscal year is awarded to MBEs. MBEs may be solicited directly to accomplish this requirement.

(iv) The ten percent (10%) requirements set forth under these regulations can be satisfied concurrently with similar requirements mandated under federal law.

(v) Nothing in these regulations shall be construed to require the award of a contract to an MBE whose bid exceeds the lowest bid by five percent (5%). Nothing in these Regulations shall be construed to require the acceptance of non-conforming goods or services.

(c) Solicitation of Bids

All departments and agencies soliciting requests for proposals for construction projects identified as having subcontracting opportunities must include in the advertisements for the project the following language: "This project is subject to Chapter 37-14.1 of the Rhode Island General Laws, and regulations promulgated thereunder, which require that ten percent of the dollar value of work performed on the project be performed by minority business enterprises."

(ii) MBE Compliance Plan

A prospective prime contractor shall include in its bid on any construction project covered by these regulations, a simple statement acknowledging its obligation to meet the ten percent (10%) requirement under these regulations. After it has been identified as the apparent low bidder, the prime contractor shall, within ten (10) working days, prepare an MBE Compliance Plan and submit it to the Director or his designee for approval. The Plan shall identify by MBE name, subcontract dollar amount and type, each subcontract that the prime contractor projects will be awarded to MBEs over the period of the project.

(d) Approval or Disapproval of MBE Plan

(i) The Director or his designee will review and approve plans that reasonably ensure compliance with the ten percent (10%) requirement.

(ii) Where the prime contractor has proved that for reasons beyond the prime contractor's control, compliance with the ten percent (10%) requirement is impossible, the Director or his designee may approve a plan that ensures compliance with an MBE utilization rate of less than ten percent (10%). To prove impossibility of compliance, there shall be a hearing, which interested parties will be notified of and permitted to attend, during which the contractor shall demonstrate the following:

(1) The prime contractor is making all appropriate efforts, including those listed in paragraph 9(d) of these regulations, to increase MBE participation in its construction project to the ten percent (10%) level.

(2) Despite the prime contractor's efforts, the prime contractor's plan represents a reasonable expectation for the participation of MBEs in state contracts given the availability of MBEs to work on the contract.

(iii) If the Director or his designee does not approve the plan the prime contractor has submitted, the prime contractor, after consulting with the Director or his designee, shall present a revised plan.

(iv) The Director may condition the approval or establishment of any adjusted requirement on any reasonable future action by the prime contractor.

(v) Each prime contract covered under these regulations shall include the following: "The contractor agrees to ensure that minority business enterprises as defined in R.I.Gen. Laws Section 37-14.1-3, shall have the maximum opportunity to participate in the performance of subcontracts performed under this agreement. The contractor will take all reasonable steps in accordance with regulations promulgated under Chapter 37-14.1 of the Rhode Island General Laws to ensure that minority business enterprises have the maximum opportunity to compete for and perform subcontracts under this agreement."

e. Compliance

(i) Each MBE coordinator will periodically conduct on-site inspections to determine compliance with the provisions of these regulations. The Division of Purchasing, the Director or the MBE Coordinator may require a prime contractor to furnish copies of purchase orders, subcontracts, cancelled checks, and other records that may indicate the number, names, dollar value of MBE subcontracts, dates, and schedule time for performance of work by an MBE subcontractor.

(ii) A prime contractor's failure to have an approved MBE Compliance Plan as required by these regulations constitutes non-compliance with these regulations.

(iii) If a prime contractor fails to meet the requirements outlined in its approved MBE Compliance Plan, it shall explain to the Director, in writing, why the requirements could not be met and why meeting the requirements was beyond the prime contractor's control.

(iv) To determine whether a prime contractor has a good faith reason for failing to meet its requirements, the Director may consider, among other factors:

(1) Whether the prime contractor attended any pre-solicitation or pre-bid meetings that were scheduled by the state contracting authority to inform MBEs of contracting or subcontracting opportunities;

(2) Whether the prime contractor advertised in general circulation, trade association, and minority focus media concerning the subcontracting opportunities;

(3) Whether the prime contractor provided written notice to a reasonable number of specific MBEs that their interest in a contract was being solicited, in sufficient time to allow the MBEs to participate effectively;

(4) Whether the prime contractor followed up initial solicitations of interest by contacting MBEs to determine with certainty whether the MBEs were interested;

(5) Whether the prime contractor selected portions of work to be performed by MBEs in order to increase the likelihood of meeting MBE participation requirements (including, where appropriate, breaking down contracts into economically feasible units to facilitate MBE participation);

(6) Whether the prime contractor provided interested MBEs with adequate information about the plans, specifications and requirements of the contract;

(7) Whether the prime contractor negotiated in good faith with interested MBEs;

(8) Whether the prime contractor made suggestions to interested MBEs to assist them in obtaining bonding, lines of credit, or insurance required by the prime contractor;

(9) Whether the prime contractor effectively used the services of available minority community organizations, minority contractors' groups, local, state and Federal minority business assistance offices; and other organizations that provide assistance in the recruitment and placement of MBEs.

(v) If the prime contractor does not make such an explanation, or if the Director determines that the prime contractor's explanation does not justify its failure to meet the requirements in its approved MBE Plan, the Director may direct the prime contractor to take appropriate remedial action. Failure to take remedial action directed by the Director is noncompliance with these regulations.

(vi) In the event of non-compliance with these regulations, the Director may take appropriate enforcement action. Such action may include suspension of payments, termination of the contract, recovery by the state of 10% of the contract price as liquidated damages and/or denial of the right to participate in future projects for up to three (3) years.