

State of Washington Disparity Study Fact Sheet



The State of Washington is conducting a Disparity Study (overseen by DES) to ensure that minority-, women-, and veteran-owned businesses have equal access to contracting opportunities.

What is a “Disparity Study”?

A Disparity Study involves compilation of evidence to determine whether M/W/VBEs have parity in State work, and if not, what narrowly tailored remedies might be supportable. The Study will include statistical evidence of the agencies’ utilization of M/W/VBEs, the availability of such businesses as a percentage of all firms in the State’s market area and relevant industries, and whether there are disparities, if any, between the availability of M/W/VBEs and their utilization on agency contracts and related subcontracts, and throughout the area economy as a whole.

Who is conducting the study?

Colette Holt & Associates (CHA), a nationally recognized expert team on disparity studies and DBE programs, in conjunction with local partner, F.M. Burch.

When will the study be completed?

The study is anticipated to be completed early 2019.

Who do I contact with questions?

You may contact the Study team at wastate_study@mwbelaw.com or (855) 692-3529. You may also contact Rex Brown, DES Administrative Director, Business Diversity Subcabinet and Study Manager, Rex.Brown@des.wa.gov or (360) 407-7926.

Where can I find additional information?

For additional information, visit the study website at wastate.disparity-study.com.

RC W 49.60.400 (I-200) Prohibits Race/Gender Based Goals. Why is a study being conducted?

While RC W 49.60.400 (I-200) prohibits race and gender based goals, it also prohibits discrimination in state contracting. The Study will provide statistical data regarding the availability of minority-, women-, as well as veteran-owned businesses versus the utilization of these firms for thirty-three state agencies.

This, coupled with anecdotal information collected from interested parties and detailed review of procurement program requirements may identify unknown barriers to entry for minority-, women- and veteran-owned firms. Study outputs will include, among other components, recommendations for race and gender neutral measures that may increase the utilization of minority-, women-, and veteran-owned firms.

How were business owners and other interested parties involved?

The participation of business owners and other interested parties (trade associations, advocacy groups, community organizations, etc.) is critical to the Study’s outcomes in two important ways.

First, the Study team contacted businesses to confirm information on specific contracts and/or to receive additional contract information that is currently not available from state agencies. With the support and assistance that was provided by business owners and stakeholders, the study will present an accurate analysis of the state’s contracting activities.

Second, interested persons were an integral part of the process for anecdotal data collection by having completed an electronic survey and/or having participated in business owner and stakeholder interviews, through group representatives at the public meetings, or having submitted written comments on their experiences and observations to the Study team.

How were business owner interviews conducted and how did business owners participate?

Small group interviews were conducted in multi-session meetings. Participants who are unable to attend the interviews but who wanted to provide input to the Study were encouraged to submit written statements to the study email: wastate_study@mwbelaw.com.