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Governor Baker Expands Supplier Opportunities for Veteran, LGBT, Disability, Diverse and Small Businesses

Massachusetts becomes 1st state to recognize LGBT-owned businesses; increases opportunities for veteran, disability, minority, women-owned businesses and MA-based small businesses

BOSTON – Reinforcing his administration’s commitment to fostering competitiveness and prosperity for small and diverse business owners, Governor Charlie Baker today announced several improvements to the state’s decades-old supplier diversity program, including best practice innovations and updates from the public and private sectors, the first expansion of benchmarks for minority and women-owned businesses in four years, and the first-time certification of veteran, disability and LGBT-owned businesses.

“We are committed to ensuring diversity as the state engages business suppliers and contractors and are excited about this opportunity to include LGBT, disability and veteran business owners in the state’s network and procurement chain,” **said Governor Baker.** “The Lieutenant Governor and I are proud to uphold our promise to expand opportunities for diverse and small businesses as our administration works to extend economic prosperity to more communities throughout the Commonwealth.”

The changes to the Commonwealth’s Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) include improvements to the state’s small and diverse business certification and reporting processes and cross-certification partnerships with the City of Boston and nationally-recognized private certification organizations.

“At the heart of these efforts is the goal to grow the number of diverse and small companies participating and conducting business with the state as well as increasing

the total dollar amount annually won by diverse and small businesses from across the Commonwealth,” **said Jabes Rojas, Deputy Chief for Access & Opportunity.** “Today’s innovations and expansions are significant and only a first step for the Baker-Polito Administration as we plan for the future of supplier diversity.”

“Today, we recognize the tremendous impact small businesses have on the economic vitality of our Commonwealth,” **said Senator Linda Dorcea Forry.** “Thank you to Governor Baker and his Administration for continuing our State’s commitment to diversity by engaging and ensuring access to opportunities for all. Expansion of our supplier diversity means growing a more sustainable, diverse and competitive economy.”

Benchmark increases and additions to the state certification procurement process include the following, with new certification categories to undergo a two to three year capacity building period prior to unveiling benchmarks:

- A **first-in-the-nation LGBT-owned business certification** partnership between the state and National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce’s (NGLCC) fully-accredited, industry-standard certification process recognized and accepted across many Fortune 1000 companies.

“We thank Governor Baker and his administration for their commitment to the LGBT community in Massachusetts,” **says NGLCC Co-Founder & President Justin Nelson.** “LGBT-inclusive supplier diversity means that there will be greater LGBT business visibility across Massachusetts. Economic visibility, just like social visibility, is essential in building a diverse and inclusive society. Governor Baker’s administration recognizes what over 1/3 of the Fortune 500 has already – including opportunities for all businesses, including those owned by LGBT people is good for business. We now call upon leaders in other states to follow the precedent set by Massachusetts to create equal business opportunities for LGBT citizens nationwide.”

- First-time certification of **businesses owned by those with disabilities** (Disability-Owned Business Enterprises or “DOBE”), in partnership with the U.S. Business Leadership Network’s (USBLN) nationally-recognized certification program, which will also conduct certifications of service-disabled, veteran-owned business enterprises (SDVOBE).

“We are excited and grateful to be a part of this historic event,” **said Jill Houghton, Executive Director, USBLN.** “We look forward to working with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and for this to be the model for the rest of the country. There are an estimated 57 million Americans with disabilities and around 15 percent of working persons with disabilities are self-employed. Our disability-owned business

enterprises and service-disabled veteran-owned business certification processes will help many businesses into the supplier diversity pipeline.”

“This is an important day for persons with disabilities throughout our Commonwealth,” said **David D’Arcangelo, Director of the Massachusetts Office on Disability**. “Our acceptance of the USBLN certification for disability owned businesses sends a clear message that state government is welcoming people of all abilities and incentivizing opportunities that promote self-determination. Today marks an important first step towards creating and supporting increased opportunities for persons with disabilities.”

- Expanding the certified service-disabled, veteran-owned business enterprises (SDVOBE) category of the Supplier Diversity Program to include all certified **veteran-owned business enterprises (VBE)**, continuing to use the federal VetBiz certification process (and new partnership with the USBLN for the certification of SDVOBEs), at a combined, existing benchmark of 3%.

“Expanding supplier diversity efforts to include all veterans affirms Governor Baker’s commitment to the men and women who have served our country and who should be provided access to business opportunities with the Commonwealth,” said **Secretary of Veterans’ Services, Francisco A. Ureña**.

- Increasing the benchmark for registered **Massachusetts-based small businesses** in the Small Business Purchasing Program (SBPP) from 2.5% to 3.3%.
- Increasing the existing certified **minority-owned business** enterprises (MBE) benchmark from 6% to 7%, and introducing a partnership with the Greater New England Minority Supplier Development Council (GNEMSDC), whereby the Commonwealth will begin accepting MBE applications approved by GNEMSDC starting on January 1, 2016.

“On behalf of our Board of Directors, our members and the countless minority business owners throughout Massachusetts, the Greater New England Minority Supplier Development Council wishes to express our gratitude to Governor Baker and his dedicated and talented administration for their commitment to creating opportunities for this important segment of the Massachusetts business community,” said **Peter Hurst, President and CEO of the Greater New England Minority Supplier Development Council**. “More successful MBEs can clearly reduce the wealth and income gap for their owners and their employees. The Council, along with our MBDA Center here in Boston, are excited about working with the Commonwealth to eliminate barriers to economic development for MBEs. Together,

we will be a positive force in the continued growth and development of the minority business community in Massachusetts.”

- Increasing the certified **women-owned business** enterprises (WBE) benchmark from 12% to 13%, and introducing a partnership with the Center for Women and Enterprise (CWE) to also begin accepting WBE applications approved by CWE on January 1, 2016.

“It is a privilege for the Center of Women & Enterprise to partner with the Commonwealth on these important and innovative initiatives and expansions,” **said Susan Rittscher, President and CEO of the Center for Women and Enterprise.** “The plans to increase benchmarks and to collaborate with regional certification agencies such as the Center for Women & Enterprise (a WBENC affiliate) demonstrate the Governor's steadfast commitment to diverse businesses in the Commonwealth.”

- Acceptance and promotion of **cross-certification with the City of Boston** of MBE and WBE applicants on January 1, 2016.

The City of Boston is also one of five municipal partners and co-hosts for the Baker-Polito Administration's [recently announced and underway](#), Supplier Diversity Regional Series. These events led by the Governor's Office of Access and Opportunity (OAO), Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD), the Operational Services Division (OSD) and OSD'S Supplier Diversity Office are designed to increase engagement and marketplace opportunities for small and diverse business enterprises with procurement officials in state and local government, educational institutions, medical facilities and the private sector.

The Baker-Polito Administration's policy changes and inclusiveness of new supplier diversity categories and partnerships, have also been made effective in a Governor's Executive Order signed today, reaffirming and expanding the Supplier Diversity Program (SDP).

In February, Governor Baker [signed Executive Order No. 559](#), elevating the Office of Access and Opportunity to the Governor's Office under the direction of a Deputy Chief of Staff to further the administration's priority of increasing diversity and inclusion within state government employment and procurement. The Executive Order also established a cross-administration Steering Committee for Access and Opportunity to coordinate best practices

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