

## MBE ATTACHMENT G-1B WAIVER GUIDANCE

### GUIDANCE FOR DOCUMENTING GOOD FAITH EFFORTS TO MEET MBE PARTICIPATION GOALS

In order to show that it has made good faith efforts to meet the Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) participation goal (including any MBE subgoals) on a contract, the bidder/offeree must either (1) meet the MBE Goal(s) and document its commitments for participation of MBE Firms, or (2) when it does not meet the MBE Goal(s), document its Good Faith Efforts to meet the goal(s).

#### I. Definitions

**MBE Goal(s)** – “MBE Goal(s)” refers to the MBE participation goal and MBE participation subgoal(s).

**Good Faith Efforts** – The “Good Faith Efforts” requirement means that when requesting a waiver, the bidder/offeree must demonstrate that it took all necessary and reasonable steps to achieve the MBE Goal(s), which, by their scope, intensity, and appropriateness to the objective, could reasonably be expected to obtain sufficient MBE participation, even if those steps were not fully successful. Whether a bidder/offeree that requests a waiver made adequate good faith efforts will be determined by considering the quality, quantity, and intensity of the different kinds of efforts that the bidder/offeree has made. The efforts employed by the bidder/offeree should be those that one could reasonably expect a bidder/offeree to take if the bidder/offeree were actively and aggressively trying to obtain MBE participation sufficient to meet the MBE contract goal and subgoals. Mere *pro forma* efforts are not good faith efforts to meet the MBE contract requirements. The determination concerning the sufficiency of the bidder's/offeree's good faith efforts is a judgment call; meeting quantitative formulas is not required.

**Identified Firms** – “Identified Firms” means a list of the MBEs identified by the procuring agency during the goal setting process and listed in the procurement as available to perform the Identified Items of Work. It also may include additional MBEs identified by the bidder/offeree as available to perform the Identified Items of Work, such as MBEs certified or granted an expansion of services after the procurement was issued. If the procurement does not include a list of Identified Firms, this term refers to all of the MBE Firms (if State-funded) the bidder/offeree identified as available to perform the Identified Items of Work and should include all appropriately certified firms that are reasonably identifiable.

**Identified Items of Work** – “Identified Items of Work” means the bid items identified by the procuring agency during the goal setting process and listed in the procurement as possible items of work for performance by MBE Firms. It also may include additional portions of items of work the bidder/offeree identified for performance by MBE Firms to increase the likelihood that the MBE Goal(s) will be achieved. If the procurement does not include a list of Identified Items of Work, this term refers to all of the items of work the bidder/offeree identified as possible items of work for performance by MBE Firms and should include all reasonably identifiable work opportunities.

**MBE Firms** – “MBE Firms” refers to a firm certified by the Maryland Department of Transportation (“MDOT”) under COMAR 21.11.03. Only MDOT-certified MBE Firms can participate in the State’s MBE Program.

## **II. Types of Actions Agency will Consider**

The bidder/offeror is responsible for making relevant portions of the work available to MBE subcontractors and suppliers and to select those portions of the work or material needs consistent with the available MBE subcontractors and suppliers, so as to facilitate MBE participation. The following is a list of types of actions the procuring agency will consider as part of the bidder's/offeror’s Good Faith Efforts when the bidder/offeror fails to meet the MBE Goal(s). This list is not intended to be a mandatory checklist, nor is it intended to be exclusive or exhaustive. Other factors or types of efforts may be relevant in appropriate cases.

### **A. Identify Bid Items as Work for MBE Firms**

#### **1. Identified Items of Work in Procurements**

(a) Certain procurements will include a list of bid items identified during the goal setting process as possible work for performance by MBE Firms. If the procurement provides a list of Identified Items of Work, the bidder/offeror shall make all reasonable efforts to solicit quotes from MBE Firms to perform that work.

(b) Bidders/Offerors may, and are encouraged to, select additional items of work to be performed by MBE Firms to increase the likelihood that the MBE Goal(s) will be achieved.

#### **2. Identified Items of Work by Bidders/Offerors**

(a) When the procurement does not include a list of Identified Items of Work or for additional Identified Items of Work, bidders/offerors should reasonably identify sufficient items of work to be performed by MBE Firms.

(b) Where appropriate, bidders/offerors should break out contract work items into economically feasible units to facilitate MBE participation, rather than perform these work items with their own forces. The ability or desire of a prime contractor to perform the work of a contract with its own organization does not relieve the bidder/offeror of the responsibility to make Good Faith Efforts.

### **B. Identify MBE Firms to Solicit**

#### **1. MBE Firms Identified in Procurements**

(a) Certain procurements will include a list of the MBE Firms identified during the goal setting process as available to perform the items of work. If the procurement provides a list of Identified MBE Firms, the bidder/offeror shall make all reasonable efforts to solicit those MBE firms.

(b) Bidders/offerors may, and are encouraged to, search the MBE Directory to identify additional MBEs who may be available to perform the items of work, such as MBEs certified or granted an expansion of services after the solicitation was issued.

#### **2. MBE Firms Identified by Bidders/Offerors**

(a) When the procurement does not include a list of Identified MBE Firms, bidders/offerors should reasonably identify the MBE Firms that are available to perform the Identified Items of Work.

(b) Any MBE Firms identified as available by the bidder/offeror should be certified to perform the Identified Items of Work.

### **C. Solicit MBEs**

1. Solicit all Identified Firms for all Identified Items of Work by providing written notice. The bidder/offeror should:

(a) provide the written solicitation at least 10 days prior to bid opening to allow sufficient time for the MBE Firms to respond;

(b) send the written solicitation by first-class mail, facsimile, or email using contact information in the MBE Directory, unless the bidder/offeror has a valid basis for using different contact information; and

(c) provide adequate information about the plans, specifications, anticipated time schedule for portions of the work to be performed by the MBE, and other requirements of the contract to assist MBE Firms in responding. (This information may be provided by including hard copies in the written solicitation or by electronic means as described in C.3 below.)

2. “All” Identified Firms includes the MBEs listed in the procurement and any MBE Firms you identify as potentially available to perform the Identified Items of Work, but it does not include MBE Firms who are no longer certified to perform the work as of the date the bidder/offeror provides written solicitations.

3. “Electronic Means” includes, for example, information provided via a website or file transfer protocol (FTP) site containing the plans, specifications, and other requirements of the contract. If an interested MBE cannot access the information provided by electronic means, the bidder/offeror must make the information available in a manner that is accessible to the interested MBE.

4. Follow up on initial written solicitations by contacting MBEs to determine if they are interested. The follow up contact may be made:

(a) by telephone using the contact information in the MBE Directory, unless the bidder/offeror has a valid basis for using different contact information; or

(b) in writing *via* a method that differs from the method used for the initial written solicitation.

5. In addition to the written solicitation set forth in C.1 and the follow up required in C.4, use all other reasonable and available means to solicit the interest of MBE Firms certified to perform the work of the contract. Examples of other means include:

(a) attending any pre-bid meetings at which MBE Firms could be informed of contracting and subcontracting opportunities; and

(b) if recommended by the procurement, advertising with or effectively using the services of at least two minority focused entities or media, including trade associations,

minority/women community organizations, minority/women contractors' groups, and local, state, and federal minority/women business assistance offices listed on the MDOT Office of Minority Business Enterprise website.

#### **D. Negotiate With Interested MBE Firms**

Bidders/Offerors must negotiate in good faith with interested MBE Firms.

1. Evidence of negotiation includes, without limitation, the following:
  - (a) the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of MBE Firms that were considered;
  - (b) a description of the information provided regarding the plans and specifications for the work selected for subcontracting and the means used to provide that information; and
  - (c) evidence as to why additional agreements could not be reached for MBE Firms to perform the work.
2. A bidder/offeror using good business judgment would consider a number of factors in negotiating with subcontractors, including MBE subcontractors, and would take a firm's price and capabilities as well as contract goals into consideration.
3. The fact that there may be some additional costs involved in finding and using MBE Firms is not in itself sufficient reason for a bidder's/offeror's failure to meet the contract MBE goal(s), as long as such costs are reasonable. Factors to take into consideration when determining whether a MBE Firm's quote is excessive or unreasonable include, without limitation, the following:
  - (a) the dollar difference between the MBE subcontractor's quote and the average of the other subcontractors' quotes received by the bidder/offeror;
  - (b) the percentage difference between the MBE subcontractor's quote and the average of the other subcontractors' quotes received by the bidder/offeror;
  - (c) the percentage that the MBE subcontractor's quote represents of the overall contract amount;
  - (d) the number of MBE firms that the bidder/offeror solicited for that portion of the work;
  - (e) whether the work described in the MBE and Non-MBE subcontractor quotes (or portions thereof) submitted for review is the same or comparable; and
  - (f) the number of quotes received by the bidder/offeror for that portion of the work.
4. The above factors are not intended to be mandatory, exclusive, or exhaustive, and other evidence of an excessive or unreasonable price may be relevant.
5. The bidder/offeror may not use its price for self-performing work as a basis for rejecting a MBE Firm's quote as excessive or unreasonable.
6. The "average of the other subcontractors' quotes received" by the bidder/offeror refers to the average of the quotes received from all subcontractors. Bidder/offeror should attempt to receive quotes from at least three subcontractors, including one quote from a MBE and one quote from a Non-MBE.
7. A bidder/offeror shall not reject a MBE Firm as unqualified without sound reasons based on a thorough investigation of the firm's capabilities. For each certified MBE that is rejected

as unqualified or that placed a subcontract quotation or offer that the bidder/offeror concludes is not acceptable, the bidder/offeror must provide a written detailed statement listing the reasons for this conclusion. The bidder/offeror also must document the steps taken to verify the capabilities of the MBE and Non-MBE Firms quoting similar work.

(a) The factors to take into consideration when assessing the capabilities of a MBE Firm, include, but are not limited to the following: financial capability, physical capacity to perform, available personnel and equipment, existing workload, experience performing the type of work, conduct and performance in previous contracts, and ability to meet reasonable contract requirements.

(b) The MBE Firm's standing within its industry, membership in specific groups, organizations, or associations and political or social affiliations (for example union vs. non-union employee status) are not legitimate causes for the rejection or non-solicitation of bids in the efforts to meet the project goal.

#### **E. Assisting Interested MBE Firms**

When appropriate under the circumstances, the decision-maker will consider whether the bidder/offeror:

1. made reasonable efforts to assist interested MBE Firms in obtaining the bonding, lines of credit, or insurance required by the procuring agency or the bidder/offeror; and
2. made reasonable efforts to assist interested MBE Firms in obtaining necessary equipment, supplies, materials, or related assistance or services.

### **III. Other Considerations**

In making a determination of Good Faith Efforts the decision-maker may consider engineering estimates, catalogue prices, general market availability and availability of certified MBE Firms in the area in which the work is to be performed, other bids or offers and subcontract bids or offers substantiating significant variances between certified MBE and Non-MBE costs of participation, and their impact on the overall cost of the contract to the State and any other relevant factors.

The decision-maker may take into account whether a bidder/offeror decided to self-perform subcontract work with its own forces, especially where the self-performed work is Identified Items of Work in the procurement. The decision-maker also may take into account the performance of other bidders/offerors in meeting the contract. For example, when the apparent successful bidder/offeror fails to meet the contract goal, but others meet it, this reasonably raises the question of whether, with additional reasonable efforts, the apparent successful bidder/offeror could have met the goal. If the apparent successful bidder/offeror fails to meet the goal, but meets or exceeds the average MBE participation obtained by other bidders/offerors, this, when viewed in conjunction with other factors, could be evidence of the apparent successful bidder/offeror having made Good Faith Efforts.

### **IV. Documenting Good Faith Efforts**

At a minimum, a bidder/offeror seeking a waiver of the MBE Goal(s) or a portion thereof must provide written documentation of its Good Faith Efforts, in accordance with COMAR 21.11.03.11, within 10 business days after receiving notice that it is the apparent awardee. The written documentation shall include the following:

**A. Items of Work (Complete Good Faith Efforts Documentation Attachment G-1C, Part 1)**

A detailed statement of the efforts made to select portions of the work proposed to be performed by certified MBE Firms in order to increase the likelihood of achieving the stated MBE Goal(s).

**B. Outreach/Solicitation/Negotiation**

1. The record of the bidder's/offeror's compliance with the outreach efforts prescribed by COMAR 21.11.03.09C(2)(a). **(Complete Outreach Efforts Compliance Statement – Attachment G-2).**

2. A detailed statement of the efforts made to contact and negotiate with MBE Firms including:

(a) the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the MBE Firms who were contacted, with the dates and manner of contacts (letter, fax, email, telephone, etc.) **(Complete Good Faith Efforts Attachment G-1C- Part 2, and submit letters, fax cover sheets, emails, etc. documenting solicitations);** and

(b) a description of the information provided to MBE Firms regarding the plans, specifications, and anticipated time schedule for portions of the work to be performed and the means used to provide that information.

**C. Rejected MBE Firms (Complete Good Faith Efforts Attachment G-1C, Part 3)**

1. For each MBE Firm that the bidder/offeror concludes is not acceptable or qualified, a detailed statement of the reasons for the bidder's/offeror's conclusion, including the steps taken to verify the capabilities of the MBE and Non-MBE Firms quoting similar work.

2. For each certified MBE Firm that the bidder/offeror concludes has provided an excessive or unreasonable price, a detailed statement of the reasons for the bidder's/offeror's conclusion, including the quotes received from all MBE and Non-MBE firms bidding on the same or comparable work. **(Include copies of all quotes received.)**

3. A list of MBE Firms contacted but found to be unavailable. This list should be accompanied by a MBE Unavailability Certificate (see Exhibit A to this Part 1) signed by the MBE contractor or a statement from the bidder/offeror that the MBE contractor refused to sign the MBE Unavailability Certificate.

**D. Other Documentation**

1. Submit any other documentation requested by the Procurement Officer to ascertain the bidder's/offeror's Good Faith Efforts.

2. Submit any other documentation the bidder/offeror believes will help the Procurement Officer ascertain its Good Faith Efforts.

**Exhibit A**  
**MBE Subcontractor Unavailability Certificate**

1. It is hereby certified that the firm of \_\_\_\_\_

(Name of Minority firm)

located at \_\_\_\_\_

(Number)

(Street)

(City)

(State)

(Zip)

was offered an opportunity to bid on Solicitation No. \_\_\_\_\_

in \_\_\_\_\_ County by \_\_\_\_\_

(Name of Prime Contractor's Firm)

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2. \_\_\_\_\_ (Minority Firm), is either unavailable for the work/service or unable to prepare a bid for this project for the following reason(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Minority Firm's MBE Representative**                      **Title**                      **Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
MDOT Certification #                      Telephone #

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3. To be completed by the prime contractor if Section 2 of this form is not completed by the minority firm.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, said Certified Minority Business Enterprise is either unavailable for the work/service for this project, is unable to prepare a bid, or did not respond to a request for a price proposal and has not completed the above portion of this submittal.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Prime Contractor**                      **Title**                      **Date**