Certification Criteria and Processes for Women-Owned Businesses

Woman Business Enterprise Certification Criteria

- Woman(en) must own and control at least 51.0% of the business
- Woman owner must be a U.S. citizen or legal resident
- Woman owner must serve as President or CEO (if both positions exist)
- Woman owner must have ownership and officer position for at least six months
- Woman owner must be active in daily management

Where to Get Certified

In addition to private third-party certifiers like the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) and The National Women Business Owners Corporation (NWBOC) -- both of which provide national certification -- several state and local agencies offer programs for certification. It is also important to note that many agencies, both federal and state, have their own certification processes.

Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract Program

The Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Federal Contract program authorizes contracting officers to set aside certain federal contracts for eligible WOSBs.

Eligibility Requirements for the Program:

To be an eligible WOSB, a company must:

- It must be a small business by SBA standards.
- Be a small business that is at least 51% percent unconditionally and directly owned and controlled by one or more women who are United States citizens.
- Have a woman manage the day-to-day operations, make long-term decisions for the business, hold the highest officer position in the business and work at the business full-time during normal working hours.

WOSB Program Certification

The SBA has approved three national organizations to act as Third Party Certifiers under the WOSB Program. The three organizations and contact information are:

- National Women Business Owners Corporation
- US Women’s Chamber of Commerce
- Women’s Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)

Women Owned Small Businesses may elect to use the services of a Third Party Certifier to demonstrate eligibility for the program, or they may self-certify. For a summary of the major differences, click here.