

## DBE/WBE CERTIFICATION ON-SITE REVIEW

The following are sample questions I have seen asked during onsite DBE and/or WBE interviews. The majority of these questions, in one way or another, are to determine if you actually control, and have the ability to control the business (i.e., the management and technical knowledge of the industry).

I listed the questions for your information. Many are followed by my tips on how these questions should be answered. I'm not telling you to fabricate your answer. I am trying to help you understand the questions, how you should respond to the questions to show the interviewer that you own and control the business, and how your business will need to operate in order to receive DBE certification.

Some questions are self-explanatory and have limited or no tips or comments following them. I have included them so that you can prepare your answers in advance and not be taken by surprise.

### **MANAGEMENT**

These are questions that are intended to verify who manages your business and also to ensure that you, the disadvantaged owner, has the management expertise and control necessary to run and grow the business.

- 1) How many hours per day and days per week does the disadvantaged owner(s) spend actively engaged in the business of this firm?

**Tips regarding the answer to this question:** You need to be working in the business when the business is operating. If your business operates from 8am-5pm daily, then that is when you need to be working in it. Absentee ownership and management will generally get your application denied. This typically means that you can't have another job and be able to manage and control your business. If your business is part time and operates on the weekends or evenings, then you could work a job in the daytime, but you would need to show you are working in your business when it operates.

**Here is additional guidance about this issue:** I am providing additional information because understanding this issue will help you understand how to respond throughout the interview. For the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification, one of the

primary criteria is that the socially and economically disadvantaged owner(s) must possess both the power and the demonstrable ability to direct or cause the direction of the management and policies of the firm. This is to ensure that the disadvantaged owner truly controls the business.

Holding an outside job can raise questions about the owner's ability to control the day-to-day operations and long-term direction of the DBE firm. If the disadvantaged owner is engaged in an outside employment that prevents them from devoting sufficient time and attention to the daily operations of the potential DBE firm, it could be a basis for denial of the certification.

However, having an outside job doesn't automatically disqualify an applicant. The key is demonstrating that despite the outside employment, the disadvantaged owner still exercises control over the DBE firm. The certifying agency will look at factors such as:

- a) The nature and extent of the outside job.
- b) The hours worked in the outside job versus the DBE firm.
- c) The disadvantaged owner's role and responsibilities in both the outside job and the DBE firm.
- d) Any other evidence that shows the disadvantaged owner's control over the DBE firm.

If an applicant holds an outside job, it's crucial to provide clear documentation and evidence that they maintain control over the DBE firm's operations and management. It's always a good idea to consult with a professional or legal expert familiar with DBE certification requirements when navigating this process.

**2) What are the disadvantaged owner's daily duties? (*Provide a full explanation*)**

Tips regarding the answer to this question: Your duties should show that you are directly involved in the primary lines of business of the company. If it is a construction firm, you should be on the sites, directing the work, know how to do the work etc. An answer like, "I handle the filing and paperwork", is not a good answer. That answer tells the interviewer that you don't manage and control the business. Your duties should also show that you make the decisions, and that you lead and guide the business direction and activities. You decide what you will