

DIVERSITY CONTRACTING:

A GUIDE FOR DEVELOPERS, BUILDERS, AND CONTRACTORS

NEW YORK EDITION



A Publication of
By the Numbers Consulting Services
Brooklyn, New York



**Diversity Contracting:
A Guide for Developers, Builders, and Contractors
New York Edition**

Contributors:
Manuel Burgos
Sergei Champagne
Rosa Burgos
Rebecca Baez
Jeremy Arias
Anthony Thompson
Zuleika Villot

Published by
By the Numbers Consulting Services Corp.
2817 Fulton Street
Brooklyn NY 11207
(718) 683-3710
www.btn-consulting.com

© 2021 By the Numbers Consulting Services Corp.

All rights reserved. Publisher grants a limited free distribution license by allowing this book to be duplicated and transmitted, in whole or part, provided that publisher information is included. Its contents may not be altered in any way without written permission from the publisher. Brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews are permissible under law as fair use.

Published 2021
First edition published 2021
Created in the United States of America

Foreword

Intentionality is the watchword when it comes to Diversity Contracting. There are many different agencies and efforts in New York State that have the goal of Diversity Contracting in their lexicon. But unfortunately, we often fall short of meeting those goals because of how Diversity Contracting is approached. There must be *Intentionality* when it comes to effectuating economic inclusion; a headline in the press that asserts Diversity Contracting goals without a meaningful process to bring that goal to fruition is simply pandering for political or other benefit.

Intentionally seeking out and creating capacity for diverse firms to participate in and benefit economically from government funded projects is a must. If we want to forge broad participation by communities that have historically been marginalized and have not been a part of the economic success government projects can create, we cannot do business as usual. Governments, agencies, developers, builders, etc. all have a role to play in increasing Diversity Contracting goals, but there has to be alignment from top to bottom. And there has to be willingness on behalf of all stakeholders to prioritize Diversity Contracting from the very start of a project, during the conceptual stages when the planning occurs. Broad outreach to the Diverse Contracting Community during the very early stages of a project can vastly improve outcomes. Understanding the obstacles and impediments (bonding, insurance, liquidity) a diverse firms may be facing provides an opportunity to proactively create solutions that will help that firm ramp up and be awarded a bid or contract.

Staffing a role internally or hiring a firm to champion Diversity Contracting is major step in the right direction and signifies *Intentionality* when it comes to promoting economic inclusion. Diversity Contracting is a rapidly growing area of critical importance. If done correctly it will allow for broader economic inclusion and will build an economy that will lift up more New Yorkers from diverse backgrounds—*Intentionally*.

Craig Livingston, Chair



The New York Real Estate Chamber

www.nyrechamber.com

NYREC is the metro area's premiere trade association dedicated to supporting real estate professionals of color, and represents the voice of the minority business community at large. Through its advocacy, hundreds of millions of dollars in diversity contracting and equity ownership have gone towards firms owned by persons of color.

Introduction

This guide represents years of BTN Consulting's diversity contracting experience, across dozens of projects completed in the tri-state area, each with varying goals and requirements.

It is written with the following entities in mind:

Developers

More than anyone else, this guide is for you, as ultimately you are responsible for meeting diversity goals. In this guide you will find planning tips, templates, and more.

Builders

General contractors and construction managers will also find this guide useful, to better understand the importance of your role in diversity contracting and steps to take to meet goals assigned to you by a developer.

Consultants, Contractors, and Suppliers

For certified firms ranging from architects to final site cleaning and everything in between, this guide can help you understand diversity goals and thus be more strategic when contacting developers and builders for opportunities.

Government Agencies

Whether you provide oversight of diversity contracting at an agency that provides subsidy, or you work in the certification unit at an agency, this guide can help you understand the process and challenges of diversity contracting from the perspective of a developer.

Local Stakeholders

Elected officials, community boards, neighborhood groups, chambers of commerce, trade associations, and local merchant associations can use this guide to learn about diversity contracting and be a partner in helping projects obtain their goals. Through this guide you will be able to ask more targeted questions when projects appear before you for support.

Persons Interested in Diversity Contracting

If you have ever wondered what goes into diversity contracting, have seen a flyer at a local hardware store advertising opportunities, or heard the term thrown around at a community meeting, this guide can help you better understand what it is all about.

If you have questions or comments, reach out to us today.



By the Numbers Consulting Services Corp.

2817 Fulton Street

Brooklyn NY 11207

(718) 683-3710

www.btn-consulting.com

Glossary

Certified: Throughout this guide, the term “certified” means a firm that has received a certification by a government agency. Your subsidy source will determine which certifications are allowable for your project. This guide references six: New York City MWBE, New York State MWBE, New York State SDVOB, School Construction Authority MWBE, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey MWBE, and New Jersey State Department of Treasury.

Diversity Contracting: For the purpose of this guide, diversity contracting is defined as awards made to certified minority-owned and woman-owned businesses (MWBE), and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses (SDVOB). These certifications come from specific government agencies as noted below.

Diversity Contracting Goals: Government agencies that award subsidy, including grants, loans, tax abatements, and more, assign diversity contracting goals to projects, both new construction and rehab/restoration. Goals are assigned as exact dollar amounts or as a variable rate based on a percentage of specific project costs. These are contracting goals, separate from your diversity hiring goals, and are not interchangeable.

In addition to the above terms, these government agency acronyms appear throughout this guide:

New York City

HPD: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development

DSBS: The New York City Department of Small Business Services

DLS: The Division of Labor Services is a department at DSBS

EDC: The New York City Economic Development Corporation

SCA: The New York City School Construction Authority

DOF: New York City Department of Finance

New York State

HCR: New York State Homes & Community Renewal

ESD: Empire State Development

PA: Port Authority of New York and New Jersey

Table of Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Glossary	5
Part 1: Planning for Diversity	
Pre-Development: The Starting Point.....	8
Understanding Your Goals.....	8
Tracking is Everything.....	8
Creating a Diversity Policy.....	8
Soft Cost Diversity Contracting	9
The Diversity-Focused Builder.....	9
Insurance, Capacity, and Finance.....	9
Preparing Your Diversity Plan.....	9
Part 2: Moving from Ideas to Action	
Contacting Certified Firms	12
Conducting Outreach Events.....	13-14
Advertising Diversity	14
Documentation.....	14
One More Chance: Leveling.....	15
Good Faith Efforts.....	15
Photo Gallery	16-17
Part 3: Getting Help	
Government as a Diversity Partner.....	19
Referrals for Certification.....	19
Technical Assistance Providers.....	19
Hire a Diversity Consultant	20
Closing Thoughts.....	20
About BTN Consulting.....	21

1

PLANNING FOR DIVERSITY

Diversity contracting starts with putting together a solid plan. This section shows you how.

Pre-Development: The Starting Point

Diversity contracting starts in your project's pre-development stage. It is more than selecting soft cost vendors that are certified; it includes choosing the right builder for your project, one that is committed to diversity contracting, has a provable track record in robust diversity outreach, and that understands that the best plans also account for possible attrition. Each of these points are covered later in this guide.

Understanding Your Goals

Pre-development is where most subsidy application decisions are made, so it makes sense to start your diversity planning during this stage of your project, as assigned goals can be substantial depending on the project's scope.

Diversity contracting with agencies can differ significantly. For example:

- The range of your diversity goals can vary depending on the agency's requirements. On the low side, you may be asked to demonstrate a good faith effort made to three certified contractors, and on the high side, up to 30% of your project's total cost.
- Some diversity goals are fixed rates, such as a percentage of subsidy awarded. Others are variable, where you will be required to do a percentage of your total hard costs which, through change orders, can vary throughout construction, sometimes by substantial amounts.
- Some agencies will allow a broad range of recognized certifications. Others will allow a single type, allowing for a limited pool of certified vendors. You may also have separate diversity goals for MBE, WBE, and SDVOB.
- And for projects that have a mix of city and state subsidies, you can end up with all the above goals, leaving you to navigate how to meet them across multiple agencies all at the same time.

The more that you know your expected goals up front, and rules governing the achievement of goals, the better the likelihood of meeting your goals and not needing to submit a Good Faith Effort Report (see page 9).

So ask questions about diversity goals when applying for subsidy, to allow your project the best possible chance for achieving its goals, and take the time to evaluate all goals in order to prepare a solid diversity contracting plan.

Tracking Is Everything

Tracking outreach is the most fundamental part of diversity contracting and parameters for this are ideally established in pre-development. It can be as simple as an Excel spreadsheet, or an online service designed specifically for tracking buyouts like Procore. Should your project not meet its diversity goals, detailed reports on your outreach efforts will be needed, so tracking from the earliest stages is very important. See page 9 for details.

Plan from earliest stages to track both soft and hard cost diversity outreach and contracting, and include the following:

- Full info on the company, including firm name, address, contact name, phone, and email address
- Trade(s) offered (some certified firms offer more than one trade)
- Certification types, and if available, the expiration dates
- Details of each contact made and method of contact, e.g. date, name of person, call or email, and brief description of the contact
- Notes, especially helpful if making a referral for technical assistance

Creating a Diversity Policy

Your project's pre-development stage is the best time to set universal policies for diversity contracting. Consider the following policies

to assign to all project staff, and consider including these items as a requirement for your builder's bid issuances:

Early notification: Set policy stating that once you have an approximate date for a bid issuance, do a public notice at least one month ahead of time. Work with local stakeholders, nonprofit economic development providers, government agencies, and elected officials to let certified firms know that a bid issuance is coming up. You can use your company's website for this or start a website for the project (a nominal cost). A website can also be used to answer questions, post pre-qual applications, etc.

Provide technical assistance proactively: If you do early notification, consider going one step further and adding a list of resources for certified contractors to get help. This small step can make all the difference in achieving your goals. BTN Consulting updates its list of technical assistance providers. Feel free to copy and paste the list as part of outreach work.

Ensure that bid issuances specify the diversity dollars: When setting diversity contracting policy, include a request of how much of the bid submission's dollars remains with the certified firm, regardless of whether the prime bidder is certified and the sub to the prime is not, and vice versa, as you may only get diversity credit for the amount that remains with the certified firm.

Speed bumps: Establish a policy for your project that, for each trade, adequate outreach has been conducted before an award can be made. If this policy comes from the developer as a contractual obligation, it puts a much-needed control in place for every single award.

Special treatment for certified firms: Leveling is a good example of this. Set policy that any bid that includes a certified firm (either prime

or second tier or supplier) receive one last chance to revise their pricing.

Maintaining certification in good standing:

This language should be in your bid packages and contract exhibits. If a firm's certification expires midway through their work, you run the risk that those dollars will not be credited towards your diversity goals.

Tracking outreach is a fundamental part of diversity contracting.

Remember the suppliers: all construction requires substantial material and supply purchases. Lists of certified suppliers can be generated through the certification database portals online. You can even go one step further and include the certified supplier list in your bids.

Soft Cost Diversity Contracting

Soft cost buyouts should never take a backseat to hard cost buyouts. It places a huge and unnecessary burden on your project's builder to meet a project's full diversity goals. These goals are ultimately the responsibility of the developer, not the builder. More important is the missed opportunity to embrace diversity contracting in all stages of your project. There are numerous well-established certified firms you should consider for the full range of soft costs including architecture, insurance, closing attorneys, engineers, and even vibration analysis (if near a subway station). Doing this helps you make a sizable dent in a project's assigned diversity goals before shovels are even in the ground.

The Diversity-Focused Builder

Your choice of a builder is the most important step in achieving diversity goals since project construction is your greatest cost, and because of that, selecting the right builder can make or break your diversity contracting plan. Going solely with the lowest bidder can save you money on the front end, and cost you severely if your project does not meet its goals.

Consider these steps when selecting a builder. While not all are required, look for half or more of the following:

- Has a track record in diversity contracting.
- Is willing to split up trades into smaller contracts, putting them within reach of more certified firms.
- Knows how to identify minority-, woman-, and service-disabled veteran-owned uncertified firms that have the potential to get certified, then advocates for them.
- Understands that a good diversity plan accounts for attrition.
- Puts controls in place for each trade's buyout to ensure adequate outreach.
- Is open to early notification of opportunities and pass on technical assistance information to certified firms.
- Has developed a working relationship with existing certified firms, particularly for major trades (e.g. concrete, plumbing, electrical, etc.).
- Understands that outreach cannot be completed by email alone.
- Has excellent inhouse tracking and documenting mechanisms.

Lack of a track record or a having a limited track record *should not* be a disqualifier if the builder is committed to diversity goals, has at least a few of the points above covered, and a commitment and the capacity to adhere to the rest. A builder with a track record will be able to provide references, either from a developer or a government agency.

Insurance, Capacity, and Finance

When planning your buyouts, it is good to recognize three major challenges that commonly face certified contractors:

- Inability to access adequate insurance
- Insufficient capacity to competitively bid
- Inability to secure financing

As the developer there are steps you can take to mitigate each of these three items. For example, ask your builder to:

- Secure blanket insurance that offsets some of a subcontractor's insurance needs.
- Have bid packages include information on lenders that provide financing when others will not.
- Also include in bid packages information on technical assistance organizations that can advise on items like creating joint ventures, preparing a bid, and more.

Recognize the three major challenges that commonly face certified contractors.

Preparing Your Diversity Plan

Some agencies call it a utilization plan, others a participation plan; regardless, as a condition of closing on your subsidy award, you are required to submit your plan. Before preparing your plan, it is important that you consider your project's diversity goals as the bare minimum to achieve, never a maximum. Your utilization/participation plan should mirror your diversity contracting plan, and all the steps taken in this guide.

That's about it on the planning. It's time to put your plan in action!

2

MOVING FROM IDEAS TO ACTION

You worked hard at putting a plan together. Now it's time to implement it.

Contacting Certified Firms

The sooner you give notice of opportunities to certified firms the better. Calling firms directly is always the best first step, not the email blast. A call is personal. You speak to an individual. That person may ask questions to which you respond, even if the answer is, “we don’t have that information yet, but I can get back to you.”

Email is a terrific tool, but best as a follow-up to a call. Mention in your phone call to look out for an email from your firm and you stand a much better chance of that email being read. In a world of constant emails and spam, you want your email to stand out, so phone call first, email second.

**Calling firms directly is
always the best first step,
not the email blast.**

Creating your call list starts with exports from the online certification database portals. As a reminder, it is important to know what certifications are accepted for your project, so you know which portals to use.

When creating lists, consider these available search parameters:

Capacity: some databases report the full size of a firm, others report largest contracts awarded to it; either way these fields can help you find firms with the capacity you need.

Commodity Codes: The NIGP (National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, Inc.) codes are currently used by all online certification database portals. There are other codes but NIGP is used by them all. They are

easy to use and can help narrow down lists of firms, particularly when looking for a specialty trade or supplier.

Keyword Search: A single keyword may produce better results than multiple words. Examples are resilient (for resilient flooring), and steel (for miscellaneous steel).

Use One Firm as a Model: A common tactic at BTN Consulting is to use a combination of keywords and capacity to identify a handful of firms, then review the commodity codes. Then find the right commodity code by reviewing a firm that you know is a good match, and do a new search, this time with the commodity code. Once you complete a search, export the results to Excel to further review and refine results. If your search produces too many results, narrow it with more parameters.

Important tip: After you export a list, read each firm’s descriptions carefully. You will find that some firms do not match what you are looking for. Others listed may be suppliers when you are looking for trade contractors. Always read the descriptions.

Conducting Outreach Events

Diversity Contracting outreach events can help attract certified firms and identify uncertified but eligible ones. They are a lot of work to put together, and their success is hard to predict regardless of how many persons confirm attendance. Still, depending on the nature or location of the project, outreach events are definitely worth consideration.

So, if planning an event, here are some tips:

Call first, email second

As previously stated, call first, email second. You will have a greater likelihood of having your email read than just doing a cold email. Before you call have a solid script ready so you

do not leave out any details; use your script to leave voicemail if necessary.

Your contact sheets

You can use the same lists you exported from the database portals as your call sheets. They are already Excel sheets, so just add a few extra columns to track the date, type of contact (phone or email), person you spoke with, attending (yes/no), follow-up email sent, and general notes. Also use your call sheet to track what numbers are out of service, if you left voicemail, etc. Do at least one follow-up phone call after the initial phone call, the day before or morning of the event.

Promoting your event

Promote the event through local stakeholders like a community board, chambers of commerce, trade associations, local merchant associates, elected officials, and posting flyers at hardware stores and construction supply shops. Do not be shy about asking elected officials to include the event in their next newsletter, as many do a weekly email blast. Subsidy dollars are government dollars. Elected officials know this and overall will be supportive.

Parking, parking, parking

The most ideal event is one that has parking on site nearby, or ample street parking, and is also close to mass transit. Lack of available parking options will have a major impact on attendance. Be sure to mention parking when you make calls and include it in your follow-up emails. Parking—and lack of parking—is a big deal for contractors.

Picking the right event type

Try to avoid ceremonial events with formal agendas and instead do drop-in style events. Contractors come in, get the info they need, ask questions, get answers, and leave. If your firm has more than one project going on, combine the two for greater results.

The best outreach events are ones conducted in the afternoon and early evenings, when owners are wrapping up for the day. Host at least two events, on different days and times, for about three hours each, giving attendees flexibility and letting you capture a wider audience.

Safety

If doing an in-person event, learn all local COVID-19 safety requirements in advance, and adhere to them strictly. Ensure your venue is large enough to meet or exceed safety requirements. Mention this when contacting contractors. Have some extra masks on hand for contractors that may have forgotten theirs, or that break during the event.

Capturing attendees

For in-person events, have sign-in sheets ready, with confirmed firms' information preprinted. It really speeds up the check-in process. Allow for alternatives to a sign-in sheet, such as leaving a business card. Get people in and out quickly. Refreshments are optional but at a minimum consider cold bottled water. Attendees will appreciate that you get them in and out quickly. Be sure to mention that it's a drop-in event when you do your calls. If hosting a hybrid event or just virtual, ensure beforehand that you have the ability to document total attendees and their information.

Virtual events

If hosting a virtual event, ensure that the host has the ability to mute attendees until presentations are finished. A virtual event can also allow attendees to submit questions during the presentation, and the host can go through them during a question and answer period.

Casting a larger net

You can also collaborate with other known projects to do a single event. BTN Consulting has done an annual contractor's event several

times now, bringing together over a dozen projects into a single venue. This tactic reduces the attrition as contractors are coming for more than one opportunity. Government agencies, local community boards, and elected officials can help identify other local projects. Do not forget to invite technical assistance providers (see Section 3: Getting Help), and let contractors know that these service providers will be present when contacting them.

Moving forward

Should you do an outreach event or not? There are definitely pros and cons to weigh out.

Consider the following:

- If you do an outreach event, you call, send an info-email, do a follow-up call, host an event, send out bid information and/or a pre-qualification package, and wait to hear back. That's a lot when you can just call with the actual opportunity.
- Despite the tremendous work that goes into executing events, they are notorious for steep attrition levels. For every 10 confirmed attendees you may only get two to four persons that show up. Sometimes even less. If you have poor attendance you may need to do a round of calls anyway.
- Since "get certified" events draw a good crowd, you can do an event that promotes opportunities and has city or state officials on hand to begin the certification process.
- Sometimes the local politics of your project demand that you do an event. If that is the case, ensure that the local stakeholders pushing you to do an event are also helping you promote it.

Advertising Diversity

Running an ad to attract certified contractors is also a great option, and not as expensive as you may think. For example, Schneps Media publishes numerous neighborhood-based newspapers, each with highly local

reach and followings. The advantage of this is that you will not only attract certified firms but also ones that may be near the project site. Community newspapers tend to have loyal followings and are read cover to cover. Schneps Media also publishes several citywide publications and Spanish-language ones too, when you need a broader reach. You can reach them at (718) 260-2500.

Besides running a formal ad in a periodical, try posting flyers in the general vicinity of your project site to attract firms. A great place to post these flyers is in the window or bulletin board of local hardware stores and construction supplier shops near the project site because that is where contractors go to shop. Shop owners are generally happy to allow you to post a flyer for contractor opportunities. Once you get their permission to post a flyer, be sure to take a photo of your flyer on the wall, window, or counter, and note the name and address of where it was posted. You may need that photo and location as evidence for a Good Faith Efforts Report (see next page).

Running an ad is also a great option, and not as expensive as you may think.

Documentation

As mentioned in Part One of this guide, having a solid, uniform, simple way of documenting outreach efforts and ongoing communications with contractors is essential to your diversity outreach plan. Some firms use Procore, which has built-in mechanisms for documenting your outreach work. There are others. A simple Excel sheet with the right columns is also more than enough for your documentation. Regardless of

the mechanism you use, it should contain:

- Firm name, contact name, address, phone, email, trade, type of certification
- Entries showing all communications made, including the date, type (phone or email), and basic details (e.g. “requested pre-qualification package; was emailed; contractor confirmed receipt”)
- Additional details of contact, including (and especially) during leveling (see below)
- Final outcome of each bid submission
- General notes

One More Chance: Leveling

In Part One of this guide, the importance of setting project-wide policies that promote diversity at every step was discussed. That needs to include leveling, when all bids have been submitted and the builder works with firms to make an award on budget. If you set policy to give all bids submitted by certified firms, or submissions that include a certified firm for part of the work, one last chance to adjust pricing to meet your budget, and explore barriers keeping them from an award (e.g. “Is your price based on the cost of insurance?” etc.), it can make all the difference in meeting your diversity goals.

It’s *not* hard to do this!

Good Faith Efforts

If your project does not meet its diversity goals, you will be asked to submit a Good Faith Efforts Report. This final step, the sum of all your outreach efforts, is important to understand should you need to prepare one as part of applying for a waiver on unmet diversity contracting goals.

Defining Good Faith Efforts

Different people will give you different definitions of Good Faith Efforts. Many will tell you to reach out to three certified firms per trade, by email, and document the results.

Some agencies also accept this as a barebones minimum, as long as it is properly documented and provable should your outreach be audited.

Best Practices

BTN Consulting defines Good Faith Efforts as using multiple outreach mechanisms over the span of a project, from pre-development to the last contract award, to reach the greatest pool of potential certified firms. It includes call-sheets full of certified firms, rich in details of genuine back and forth communication, photos of flyers posted, contact with elected officials and community groups, copies of ads run in local papers, evidence of seeking help from government agencies, lists of firms that you helped get certified, and much more.

Worst Practices

Practices that can detract from Good Faith Efforts are:

- Not opening enough trades to certified firms (meaning, a builder with non-certified preferred firms preselected for awards, and a sham outreach process)
- Email-only contact mechanisms
- A lack of back-and-forth exchanges
- Not notifying government subsidy providers of buyout issues early on
- Other short-cut related tactics

Final Notes on Good Faith Efforts

Following this guide will help you compile everything you need for a Good Faith Efforts Report, showing that your project team did everything possible to meet your assigned diversity contracting goals, including the needed documentation to back it up.

Good Faith Efforts should *not* be, “Absolute Bare Minimum Efforts,” which misses the entire point of diversity contracting, and government agencies know *exactly* how to check for this.



Trade contractors prefer the drop-in style event. They work the room, get the info they need from each project, ask questions, get answers, and leave.



Advertise your outreach events locally. Place flyers where trade contractors are likely to go, such as hardware stores and construction supply shops.



Service Providers at events are a plus. For example, have NYC Department of Small Business Services host a table or speak at your event.



Agenda-based events properly promoted with good notice among the community and stakeholders can fill a room for project presentations.



Local outreach events help connect MWBE and SDVOB contractors and suppliers directly with builders and developers.



Technical assistance providers like BOCnet provide valuable aid to contractors. They can assist with financing, preparing bids, securing insurance, and more.

3

GETTING HELP

**Resources and ideas that can
make all the difference in
meeting your diversity goals.**

Government as a Diversity Partner

If you are having trouble meeting your diversity goals, chances are that you will know that in the early stages of buyouts. It could be from a lack of responses, a lack of available qualified contractors, or other factors. Do not wait until buyouts are completed before reaching out to the government agency that issued your goals. If you wait too long, and you do not meet goals, agencies may question why you did not request help while there was still time.

If you are having trouble meeting your goals, reach out for help before it is too late.

Government agencies can help you identify qualified firms by helping you review certified contractors working on other subsidized projects or can do an email blast based on specific trades. Bottomline is that it is important to reach out to the agency that provided subsidy for help before it is too late.

Referrals for Certification

One of the direct benefits of early notification of bid opportunities is that it can create an incentive for eligible firms to get certified. Some agencies may give you provisional diversity credit for a firm if there is a legitimate certification pending, if certification is received before the project is completed. If the firm does not receive its certification on time, you can include the work you did to help move their application forward as part of your Good Faith Efforts. These reasons alone are great incentive for you to make these types of referrals.

If a firm is in the running for a contract on your project and is already in the process of

getting certified, you can be very helpful by providing a letter to the certifying agency stating that fact. The letter does not have to be long but should be on your letterhead and include the following:

- Name and info of the firm seeking certification
- The agency's application number
- Basic details of the contract including the trade(s) being performed, estimated dates of work, and estimated contract value

Send the letter by mail to the certifying agency, then email a copy to the firm seeking certification and keep a copy for yourself.

Technical Assistance Providers

Technical assistance can take many forms. It could be help in forming a joint venture. It could be securing financing for credit challenged firms. It can even be help with kicking the tires of a bid before submission.

One excellent technical assistance provider is BOCnet, a citywide nonprofit economic development and advocacy organizations. Their contact information is:

Business Outreach Center Network, Inc.

85 South Oxford Street, 2nd Fl.

Brooklyn NY 11217

(718) 624-9115

www.bocnet.org

info@bocnet.org

There are other technical assistance providers out there. Trade associations, chambers, and merchant associations often have programs for their members to help with financing, joint venturing, and more. There are also neighborhood-based nonprofit economic development organizations and nearby BIDs (Business Improvement Districts) that can be helpful. They can identify contractors and suppliers that you may have trouble reaching.

Some chambers of commerce also offer their members services through valuable and timely workshops, help with insurance, and more.

In addition to these organizations, the certifying government agency may have programs available to certified firms. One example is the NYC Department of Small Business Services. It has many programs and services available, including estimation, joint venturing, and securing a bond. These programs are available to city-certified firms, just for the asking, at no cost to the certified firm. Just like with buyouts, think of government as your partner in diversity.

The list goes on. There is a lot of extra help out there so take the time to look.

Hire a Diversity Consultant

A diversity consultant is worth considering whether you are new to diversity contracting or have projects with multiple lines of subsidy and differing diversity goal requirements, and everything in between.

While it is always best to get a diversity consultant on board in pre-development, a good one will help you regardless of what stage your project is in. That said, waiting too late to make this move may significantly limit their ability to help.

When choosing a diversity consultant, consider the following:

- The consultant should have a track record in deploying multiple outreach mechanisms, on a timeline, with clear documentation and evidence of past work performed.
- The consultant should also be well-versed in different agency requirements, point out where diversity goals do not overlap, and provide guidance for making it all work.
- Besides the outreach work, a diversity

consultant can complete your regular compliance reporting for your project. The two services go hand-in-hand.

- And finally, a diversity consultant should sound the alarm, proactively, when it appears that your project will not meet its goals, and then provide quality advice on next steps.

BTN Consulting is one of the tri-state's leading diversity contracting consultants and compliance managers. Developers, builders, and contractors count on BTN Consulting to help meet goals and work with government agencies to get help.

Read more about BTN Consulting and its full set of services on the following page.

Closing Thoughts

As comprehensive as this guide is, there are always untried mechanisms to improve outreach and deliver true diversity contracting. Remember to be meticulous with documenting all your work, every call, email, follow-up, event, etc.

We at BTN Consulting hope that this guide was helpful to you. Use the contact page on our website to send us feedback, ideas for the next edition, or to ask questions.

Thanks for reading!

About BTN Consulting

By the Numbers Consulting Services Corp (BTN Consulting) is a leading provider of diversity contracting outreach and compliance, affirmative hiring, and other supportive services to tri-state housing and commercial developers, and property managers.

BTN Consulting also provides a wide variety of data-related and outreach services to elected officials, community-based organizations, individuals seeking public office, and more. Whether it's diversity outreach and tracking, construction contract compliance, tenant advocacy, GIS data mapping, community-based surveying and polling, or demographic data services, BTN Consulting is the tri-state region's go-to firm.

BTN Consulting is a 100% minority-owned firm that is multilingual (English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole). It is headquartered in Brooklyn, New York, and works throughout New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and soon Puerto Rico. It has offices in New York and Puerto Rico.



By the Numbers Consulting Services Corp.

2817 Fulton Street
Brooklyn NY 11207
(718) 683-3710
btn@btn-consulting.com