



## FAQs for WOSBs/EDWOSBs

### CONSIDERING THE NEW WOSB FEDERAL CONTRACTING PROGRAM REGULATIONS

#### General Questions

**1. What is the Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contracting Program?**

- a. The Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contracting Program (WOSB Federal Contracting Program) was created to help provide a level playing field for women business owners. When buying goods and services, the federal government limits competition for certain contracts to women-owned small businesses (WOSBs) and economically disadvantaged women-owned small businesses (EDWOSBs) that participate in the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) WOSB Federal Contracting Program. Becoming certified for the WOSB Federal Contracting Program means your business is eligible to compete for WOSB Federal Contracting Program set-aside contracts within eligible industries. These contracts are in industries where women-owned small businesses are underrepresented. Some contracts are restricted further to EDWOSBs. The SBA maintains a [list of those eligible industries and their NAICS codes](#). The federal government's goal is to award at least 5 percent of all federal contract dollars to women-owned small businesses each year. Firms that choose not to participate in SBA's WOSB Federal Contracting Program may continue to identify as a women-owned small business in SAM.gov for the purposes of competing for other contracts. However, they WILL NOT be eligible to pursue federal contracts restricted for SBA-certified WOSBs and/or EDWOSBs. To review eligibility requirements for the WOSB Federal Contracting Program, firms can visit the [WOSB Ready website](#).

**2. Why did the certification process for WOSBs and EDWOSBs change?**

- a. The changes to the certification process implement Congress' changes to the WOSB Federal Contracting Program, as put forth in the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), with new WOSB Federal Contracting Program regulations intended to enhance program oversight and effectiveness.

**3. When did the changes to the certification process go into effect?**

- a. The new WOSB Federal Contracting Program regulations were published in the [Federal Register](#) on May 11, 2020. These final regulations fully detail changes to the certification process. The regulations went fully into effect on October 15, 2020.



- 4. Does SBA offer a free certification process?**
  - a. Yes. Firms can submit applications under SBA’s new, FREE online certification process for initial processing. All WOSB Federal Contracting Program participants will be required to create a new account and upload all necessary documents to demonstrate their eligibility in order to compete for WOSB Federal Contracting Program set-aside and sole-source contracts. On October 15, 2020, SBA began issuing decisions on certification. See the below “Application Process” section on what to expect after submitting your application.
- 5. Is third-party certification still an option?**
  - a. Yes, small businesses have the option utilize an SBA-approved Third-Party Certifier (TPC), at a cost, to obtain WOSB or EDWOSB certification.
- 6. Is self-certification still an option?**
  - a. Self-certification is no longer an option as of October 15, 2020. For previously self-certified WOSBs and EDWOSBs, all documents previously uploaded in [certify.sba.gov](https://certify.sba.gov) will be available through March 31, 2021, for retrieval. All firms have to either certify through SBA’s new, FREE online certification process at [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov) or through an approved TPC, at a cost.
- 7. When and how will SBA provide us with more information about the changes to the certification process?**
  - a. We provide regular updates on [sba.gov/wosbready](https://sba.gov/wosbready) and [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov).
- 8. Whom should I contact with questions about the new certification process?**
  - a. You can find resources at [sba.gov/wosbready](https://sba.gov/wosbready) as well as in the [beta.certify.sba.gov knowledge base](https://beta.certify.sba.gov/knowledge-base). You also can contact your local SBA regional and district office or Women’s Business Center by visiting [sba.gov/local-assistance](https://sba.gov/local-assistance).
- 9. Who can qualify as a small business?**
  - a. To qualify as a WOSB or EDWOSB, a business concern must be a small business as defined in Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) [Title 13 part 121](https://www.ecfr.gov/title-13/part-121) for its primary industry classification. [13 CFR 127.200\(a\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/title-13/part-127/section-127.200(a)) and [13 CFR 121.105\(a\)\(1\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/title-13/part-121/section-121.105(a)(1)) provide that a business concern must be organized for profit in order to meet the definition of a small business.
- 10. Do I need to operate in a particular NAICS code in order to demonstrate that I am a women-owned small business?**
  - a. The NAICS codes are not a requirement to demonstrate that you are a women-owned small business. Your company may qualify as a women-owned small business provided that it meets the eligibility requirements.



- To qualify, one or more women must own and control the business. The ownership must be at least 51 percent and direct and unconditional. Regulations do not require a women-owned small business to primarily operate in an eligible NAICS code. However, if you wish to participate in set-asides for the WOSB Federal Contracting Program, you must offer services in one of the [designated NAICS codes](#) authorized for use under the WOSB Federal Contracting Program.
- If you do not see your NAICS codes designated for WOSB procurements, there might not be any set-aside opportunities for which you can compete at this time.

## Currently Certified WOSBs/EDWOSBs

### 1. What is required of me now that the changes to the WOSB Federal Contracting Program have been implemented?

- a. All firms need to take action in [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov) in order to compete for WOSB Federal Contracting Program set-aside contracts. The new platform comes with technical enhancements to better manage the processing of WOSB/EDWOSB applications. All WOSB Federal Contracting Program participants will be required to create a new account and upload all necessary documents to demonstrate their eligibility. Please visit the “[Application Process](#)” section of this FAQ for further information. Please visit our website at [sba.gov/wosbready](https://sba.gov/wosbready) for the most up-to-date information.

### 2. I am a TPC-certified WOSB or EDWOSB. Do I need to submit an application on [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov)?

- a. Yes, all firms that are certified through an approved TPC will have to create a new account in the new certification platform and submit an application. Early in the application, you will be asked if you have an existing qualified certification—here you will be able to upload your TPC certificate for SBA to complete initial processing.

### 3. I am a self-certified WOSB or EDWOSB with active WOSB or EDWOSB set-aside contracts. Do I need to recertify?

- a. Please see the [certification options table](#) to see how your firm’s past contracting status may impact your certification options.
- b. **NOTE:** All WOSB Federal Contracting Program participants will be required to create a new account at [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov) and submit an application for certification in order to compete for WOSB Federal Contracting Program set-aside and sole-source contracts posted after October 15, 2020. See the below “[Application Process](#)” section on what to expect after submitting your application.



- 4. I am a self-certified WOSB or EDWOSB with no active contracts. Do I need to recertify?**
  - a. Previously self-certified firms with no active contracts will need to get formally certified by SBA under the updated process in [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov) in order to compete for WOSB Federal Contracting Program set-aside contracts.

## WOSBs/EDWOSBs Aspiring to Become Certified

- 1. Does my status in another certification program (CVE or 8[a]) make me certified for WOSB procurements?**
  - a. Evidence of certification through the Department of Veterans Affairs Center for Verification and Evaluation (CVE) or SBA's 8(a) certification, in conjunction with evidence that the applicant meets the additional eligibility requirements of a WOSB or EDWOSB, will be accepted by SBA for WOSB/EDWOSB certification in [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov). Going forward, SBA will evaluate the suitability of other potential certifiers, including new TPCs, and other government entity certifiers. Please see the certification table at [sba.gov/wosbready](https://sba.gov/wosbready) for necessary documentation for each program.
- 2. Where can I find resources to help me prepare to do business with the federal government?**
  - a. Visit [sba.gov/local-assistance](https://sba.gov/local-assistance) to connect with entities such as your local SBA office or Women's Business Center that can help you prepare for doing business with the federal government.

## Application Process

- 1. How can I apply to become certified as a WOSB or EDWOSB?**
  - a. Currently, the WOSB Federal Contracting Program is a certification program with an option to use a TPC at a cost to complete the certification. Since the new WOSB Federal Contracting Program regulations have been enacted, you can certify through a formal SBA process free of charge. Small businesses can continue to certify through approved TPCs at a cost.
  - b. You can find a checklist and quick start guide to assist you in completing the application on [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov).
- 2. Since the new changes went into effect for the WOSB Federal Contracting Program in 2020, how do I apply to become SBA-certified as a WOSB or EDWOSB?**
  - a. The new FREE SBA certification process transitioned to a new online platform, [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov), for program participants that includes many technical improvements.



- b. All firms should be aware of the following:
  - All firms, whether they are self-certified or certified by a TPC, will need to create a new account and submit an application in the new certification platform.
  - Firms certified by a TPC will have to upload their TPC certificate for SBA to complete initial processing.
  - Documents in [certify.sba.gov](https://certify.sba.gov) will not transfer to the new platform. Firms with documentation in [certify.sba.gov](https://certify.sba.gov) should download their documents, make any necessary updates, and prepare to create a new application in the new platform.

**3. Since the new changes went into effect for the WOSB Federal Contracting Program in 2020, will other certifications be accepted?**

- a. Yes, certain other certifications are still accepted. You may be required to submit additional information demonstrating evidence of your certification. Currently, the SBA will accept current 8(a) participants, SBA-approved TPC certificates, and certifications from the CVE.
  - **Current 8(a) Program Participants**—Upload most recent annual review letter or 8(a) acceptance letter if the firm is in program year 1.
  - **Third-Party Certified**—Upload WOSB and/or EDWOSB certificate from an SBA-approved Third-Party Certifier.
  - **CVE**—Upload certificate and supporting documentation (based on the new WOSB Federal Contracting Program regulations).
- b. **NOTE:** Women’s Business Enterprise (WBE) certificates and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certificates do not currently satisfy WOSB/EDWOSB program requirements.

**4. Is there a checklist firms should follow to avoid missing documents on their application?**

- a. Missing or incorrect documents will delay or cause an application to be rejected. In order to ensure all necessary documents are uploaded to the portal, carefully review the [documentation checklists](https://beta.certify.sba.gov) on [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov) prior to applying and collect the necessary documents in advance. Applicants may receive requests for additional information from an SBA representative based upon their application and initial answers. Please review the [WOSB Applicant User Guide](#) section on “Requests for Information” for details on how to respond (pages 65–66).

**5. After a firm has submitted an application in [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov), what is the next step?**

- a. SBA began issuing decisions on certification as of October 15, 2020. If a firm’s application is deemed insufficient or incomplete, an SBA representative may



reach out to request additional information or documentation. SBA will make its determination within ninety (90) calendar days after receipt of a **complete package**, whenever practicable.

## Managing Your Account

- 1. How do firms create an account and claim their business in [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov)?**
  - a. To apply for WOSB or EDWOSB certification on [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov), firms need to first obtain a [Data Universal Numbering System](https://www.duns.com/) (DUNS) number and have an active account on [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov). Firms should make sure to maintain and update their [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) data to ensure their information is accurate as it will be used to determine their eligibility for the program when they claim their business in [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov). The business owner should be the one to create the account and claim the business.
    - To find their business and claim it, they must type in their DUNS number, Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN), and Marketing Partner Identification Number (MPIN) from [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).
    - Once their business appears, hit “Claim.”
  - b. Once the account is created and they begin the application, they will be asked if they wish to assign a delegate to work on the application. This ensures individuals other than the business owner are not listed as the highest owner. However, note that the business owner will be the one required to attest and submit the application.
- 2. Once a firm is certified in [beta.certify.sba.gov](https://beta.certify.sba.gov), what do they have to do to maintain their certification?**
  - a. Certified firms will have to take action annually to attest to meeting the program requirements set forth in 13 CFR 127. On a firm’s first and second anniversary of certification, they will have to perform an annual update questionnaire. On a firm’s third anniversary of certification, they will have to complete a recertification. The annual update and recertification processes are detailed in this [beta.certify.sba.gov Knowledge Base Article](https://beta.certify.sba.gov).