

January 23, 2026

FROM: Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE)

TO: Maryland Certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Firms, Industry Partners, and Customers

Background

The Maryland Department of Social and Economic Mobility, established under House Bill 1253 (Chapter 605, Laws of Maryland 2025), is the principal department of State government and the first cabinet-level agency in the United States dedicated to removing structural barriers to social and economic mobility.

Effective October 1, 2025, three existing State offices focused on social equity programming have been consolidated into a single, integrated department. Specifically, the Department of Social and Economic Mobility is now comprised of:

- the Office of Minority Business Enterprise;
- the Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs; and
- the Office of Social Equity.

This consolidation enables the State to better coordinate equity initiatives, increase operational efficiency, and promote economic opportunity for all Marylanders.

The Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE) will continue to serve as Maryland's certification entity for the Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Program, the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program, the Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE) Program, and the Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Program.

Introduction

On October 3, 2025, the U.S. Department of Transportation issued an interim final rule (IFR) requiring immediate changes to the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE) program regulations. Among other things, the IFR requires OMBE to conduct a thorough reevaluation of all currently certified DBE and ACDBE firms in Maryland. The following briefly describes what these changes mean for you and what you can expect from OMBE.

Key Provisions from the Interim Final Rule issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation

- **Certification Review:** All DBE and ACDBE firms previously certified by the State of Maryland must be reevaluated by OMBE to determine eligibility under the new standards established in the IFR.
- **Personal Narrative Requirement:** Each individual owner of a firm applying to participate as a DBE or ACDBE, whose ownership and control are relied upon for DBE/ACDBE certification, must now submit a detailed personal narrative (PN) establishing the existence of individualized social and economic disadvantage.
- To support claims of disadvantage, an owner must provide OMBE with a PN that establishes the existence of disadvantage by a preponderance of the evidence based on individualized proof regarding "specific instances of economic hardship, systemic barriers, and denied opportunities that impeded the owner's progress or success in education, employment, or business, including obtaining financing on terms available to similarly situated persons who did not face barriers in obtaining terms." *Disadvantaged*

Business Enterprise Program and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise in Airport Concessions Program Implementation Modifications, 90 Fed. Reg. at 47976 (Oct. 3, 2025) (Interim Final Rule). Moreover, the PN must “state how and to what extent the impediments caused the owner economic harm, including a full description of type and magnitude, and must establish the owner is economically disadvantaged in fact relative to similarly situated non-disadvantaged individuals.” *Id.*

- **Personal Net Worth Statement:** In addition to the personal narrative, owners of a certified DBE or ACDBE firm must submit a current personal net worth statement with the required supporting documentation.

DBE Impact

- As of October 3, 2025, DBE/ACDBE certifications for any firm previously certified in Maryland are no longer applicable for participation in these programs until OMBE completes its reevaluation process. **All businesses that held DBE/ACDBE status must reapply under the new certification standards in order to be recertified.**
- Affected firms will be notified directly. The notice will include detailed instructions regarding the certification reevaluation process and submission requirements (e.g., personal narrative and personal net worth statement) for firms seeking recertification.
- DBE/ACDBE firms must submit a personal narrative and current personal net worth statement to be reviewed by OMBE during the certification reevaluation process.
- Firms that fail to comply with Maryland’s DBE/ACDBE certification reevaluation requirements will remain ineligible for participation in the DBE and ACDBE programs.
- If a firm is decertified following their certification reevaluation, they may appeal OMBE’s decision to USDOT, or reapply 12 months later.

Next Steps

Pursuant to the federally-mandated certification reevaluation process, OMBE will send an email announcing a submission date for all currently certified Maryland DBE/ACDBE firms and requesting a personal narrative and current personal net worth statement through Maryland’s Vendor Management System - <https://marylandmdbe.mdbecert.com/>. Failure to submit the requested documents as part of Maryland’s certification reevaluation process will result in a firm remaining ineligible for participation Maryland’s DBE and ACDBE programs.

OMBE Support & Resources

OMBE is committed to assisting currently certified Maryland DBE and ACDBE firms through this transition. We are actively mobilizing additional staffing resources and will continue to publish information for businesses needing to submit documentation. For questions, please email OMBE (mbe.dosem@maryland.gov), using the subject line “IFR Certification Reevaluation Question.”

Sincerely,



Walter L. Simmons

Acting Secretary

Department of Social and Economic Mobility