



U.S. Small Business
Administration

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 is the certification process for WOSBs and EDWOSBs changing?

- a. The changes to the certification process will 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 do 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.



- 4. Will currently certified WOSBs need to recertify?**
 - a. Please see the “Currently Certified WOSBs/EDWOSBs” section below or the certification table at sba.gov/wosbready to see if you will need to recertify.
- 5. Is SBA going to offer a free certification process?**
 - a. Yes. On July 15, 2020, firms can begin submitting 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. Further instructions for the new certification process are coming soon. On October 15, 2020, SBA will begin issuing decisions on certification.
- 6. Will third-party certification still be an option?**
 - a. Yes, small businesses will still be able to utilize an approved Third-Party Certifier (TPC), at a cost, to obtain WOSB or EDWOSB certification.
- 7. Will self-certification still be an option?**
 - a. Firms must be certified in order to compete for WOSB Federal Contracting Program set-aside contracts. Once the new WOSB Federal Contracting Program regulations go into effect, you will have to either certify through SBA’s new, FREE online certification process or through an approved TPC, at a cost. Self-certification will not be an option as of October 15, 2020.
- 8. When and how will SBA provide us with more information about the changes to the certification process?**
 - a. We will provide regular updates on sba.gov/wosbready and through email and e-newsletter updates.
- 9. Whom should I contact with questions about the new certification process?**
 - a. You can find resources at sba.gov/wosbready. You also can contact your local SBA regional and district office or Women’s Business Center by visiting sba.gov/local-assistance.
- 10. Who can qualify as a small business?**
 - a. In order 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](#) for its primary industry classification. [13 CFR 127.200\(a\)](#) and [13 CFR 121.105\(a\)\(1\)](#) provide that a business concern must be organized for profit in order to meet the definition of a small business.



11. Does the WOSB Federal Contracting Program have a logo I can use to market my business as a certified women-owned small business?

- a. No, the SBA currently does not have an approved logo for usage by small businesses for the WOSB or EDWOSB certifications. However, we encourage you to include language in your marketing materials indicating that you are a WOSB-certified business.

12. 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. I'm aware that there are upcoming changes to the WOSB Federal Contracting Program in 2020. What will be required of me?

- a. Please note that the formal certification process for the WOSB Federal Contracting Program will be moving into a platform that will have a similar look and feel as the current certify.sba.gov. 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. Additional guidance on the SBA's WOSB Federal Contracting Program will be available once the new WOSB Federal Contracting Program regulations are published. Please visit our website at sba.gov/wosbready for the most up-to-date information.

2. I am a TPC-certified WOSB or EDWOSB. Do I need to recertify?

- a. All firms that are certified through an approved TPC will have to create a new account in the new certification platform and upload their TPC certificate for SBA to complete initial processing. TPC-certified firms must recertify three years after the date of their most recent recertification as a TPC-certified firm.



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

- a. A firm that was eligible as a WOSB or EDWOSB at the time of offer for the contract is considered a WOSB or EDWOSB throughout the life of the contract. For the purposes of contracts (including multiple award contracts) with durations of more than five years (including options), a firm must get certified by SBA or an approved TPC prior to the end of the fifth year of the contract.
- b. **NOTE:** On July 15, 2020, firms can begin submitting applications under the new 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. Further instructions for the new certification process are coming soon. On October 15, 2020, SBA will begin issuing decisions on certification.

4. I am a self-certified WOSB or EDWOSB with no active contracts. Do I need to recertify?

- a. Self-certified firms with no active contracts need to get formally certified by SBA under the updated process 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. 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 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 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 self-certified as a WOSB or EDWOSB?

- a. Currently, the WOSB Federal Contracting Program is a self-certification program with an option to use a TPC at a cost to complete the self-certification. Once the new WOSB Federal Contracting Program regulations are enacted, you will be able to certify through a formal SBA process free of charge. Small businesses can continue to certify through approved TPCs at a cost. Additional guidance on the SBA's new certification process for the WOSB Federal Contracting Program will be available once the new regulations are published.
- b. The current self-certification process will remain available for firms until October 15, 2020, in certify.sba.gov. You can find a [checklist](#) and [quick start guide](#) to assist you in completing the application on certify.sba.gov.

2. Once new changes are in 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 will transition to a new online platform for program participants that will include many technical improvements. This new platform will be available on July 15, 2020, to begin accepting applications for the SBA certification process. Further guidance on how to apply through this platform will be given when it is complete.
- b. All firms should be aware of the following:
 - i. All firms, whether they are self-certified or certified by a TPC, will need to create a new account in the new certification platform.
 - ii. Firms certified by a TPC will have to upload their TPC certificate for SBA to complete initial processing.
 - iii. Documents in certify.sba.gov will not transfer to the new platform. Firms with documentation in certify.sba.gov should download their documents, make any necessary updates, and prepare to create a new application in the new platform.

3. Once new changes are in effect for the WOSB Federal Contracting Program in 2020, will other certifications be accepted?

- a. Yes, certain other certifications will be accepted. You may be required to submit additional information demonstrating evidence of your certification. Currently, the SBA will accept current 8(a) participants, approved TPC certificates, and certifications from the CVE.
 - i. **Current 8(a) Program Participants**—Upload most recent annual review letter or 8(a) acceptance letter if the firm is in program year 1.
 - ii. **TPC-Certified**—Upload WOSB and/or EDWOSB certificate.
 - iii. **CVE**—Upload certificate and supporting documentation (based on the new WOSB Federal Contracting Program regulations).