

DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM
Unified Certification Agreement, Policies & Procedures

Missouri Regional



Certification Committee

MISSOURI REGIONAL CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE

Unified Certification Partners

U.S. Department of Transportation Partners

Missouri Department of Transportation
Metro
City of Kansas City, Missouri
Lambert St. Louis Airport Authority
Kansas City Area Transportation Authority
Federal Highway Administration
Federal Transit Administration
Federal Aviation Administration

Sub-Recipient Partners

City Utilities of Springfield
City of St. Joseph
City of Springfield
City of Columbia
Mid America Regional Council
East West Gateway Coordinating Council

U.S. Department of Transportation Recipients

Bootheel Regional Planning & Economic Dev. Comm.	City Of Liberty	County Of Benton
Burlington Northern Railroad	City Of Maplewood	County Of Boone
Cape County Transit Inc	City Of Marshall	County Of Butler
City Of Ballwin	City Of Marshfield	County Of Caldwell
City Of Berkeley	City Of Mexico	County Of Callaway
City Of Blue Springs	City Of Moberly	County Of Callaway-Bridge Fund
City Of Bolivar	City Of Monett	County Of Cape Girardeau
City Of Boonville	City Of Neosho	County Of Carroll
City Of Branson	City Of Nevada	County Of Cass
City Of Breckenridge Hills	City Of New Madrid - Transit	County Of Cedar
City Of Butler	City Of New Madrid Light & Power	County Of Christian
City Of Camdenton	City Of North Kansas City	County Of Clark
City Of Cape Girardeau	City Of Overland	County Of Clay-Highway Dept
City Of Carthage	City Of Ozark	County Of Crawford
City Of Cassville	City Of Pacific	County Of Dade
City Of Chillicothe	City Of Pagedale	County Of Daviess
City Of Clayton	City Of Palmyra	County Of Dekalb
City Of Clinton	City Of Paris	County Of Douglas
City Of Columbia	City Of Parkville	County Of Dunklin
City Of Cool Valley	City Of Poplar Bluff	County Of Franklin
City Of Cottleville	City Of Raymore	County Of Gasconade
City Of Crane	City Of Republic	County Of Gentry
City Of Creve Coeur	City Of Republic - WPCP	County Of Greene
City Of Cuba	City Of Rolla	County Of Grundy
City Of Dexter	City Of Sikeston	County Of Harrison
City Of Eldorado Springs	City Of Springfield	County Of Henry
City Of Ellisville	City Of St. Charles	County Of Holt
City Of Excelsior Springs	City Of St. John	County Of Howard
City Of Farmington	City Of St. Joseph	County Of Iron
City Of Ferguson	City Of St. Louis	County Of Jackson
City Of Florissant	City Of St. Peters	County Of Jackson-Public Works
City Of Fredericktown	City Of St. Robert	County Of Jasper
City Of Fulton	City Of Sullivan	County Of Jefferson
City Of Gladstone	City Of Warsaw	County Of Johnson
City Of Grant City	City Of Washington	County Of Knox
City Of Hannibal	City Of Webster Groves	County Of Laclede
City Of Houston	City Of West Plains	County Of Lawrence
City Of Independence	City Of Weston	County Of Lewis Commission
City Of Jackson	City Of Wildwood	County Of Lincoln
City Of Jefferson	City Of Willow Springs	County Of Linn
City Of Jefferson City	City Utilities Of Springfield	County Of Livingston
City Of Joplin	County Of Macon Commission	County Of Macon
City Of Kansas City	County Of Adair	County Of Madison
City Of Kearney	County Of Andrew	County Of Mercer
City Of Kennett	County Of Atchison	County Of Miller
City Of Kirksville	County Of Barry	County Of Mississippi
City Of Lamar	County Of Barton	County Of Mississippi - Transit
City Of Lee's Summit	County Of Bates	County Of Moniteau
		County Of Monroe

MISSOURI REGIONAL CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE

U.S. Department of Transportation Recipients

County Of Montgomery
County Of New Madrid
County Of Newton
County Of Nodaway
County Of Osage
County Of Ozark
County Of Pemiscot
County Of Pemiscot - Port
County Of Perry
County Of Pettis
County Of Phelps
County Of Pike
County Of Platte
County Of Polk
County Of Polk
County Of Putnam
County Of Ray
County Of Ripley
County Of Saline
County Of Schuyler
County Of Scotland
County Of Shelby
County Of St. Charles
County Of St. Clair

County Of St. Louis
County Of Stoddard
County Of Stone-Courthouse
County Of Sullivan
County Of Texas
County Of Vernon
County Of Vernon
County Of Warren
County Of Washington
County Of Wayne
County Of Worth
County Of Wright
Dept. Of Natural Resources
Division Of Environmental
Dunklin County Transit Service
E/W Gateway Coord. Council
Franklin County Transportation
Gateway Western Railway
Green Hills Rural Development
Greene County Highway Dept.
Jackson Co. Parks & Rec.
Kansas City Southern Railway
Lamar City Utilities
Macon Chamber Of Commerce
Madison County Transit District

Marion County Commission
Meramec Community
Enhancement
Mississippi County Port Authority
Missouri Public Transit Assoc.
Missouri Transportation Finance Corp.
Missouri Vocational Enterprise
Mo & Northern Area RR Co Inc
Norfolk Southern Railroad Co
Oats Inc
Platte County Public Works Dept.
Ray County Transportation
Ripley County Transit Inc
Scott County Transit System
Southeast Missouri State Univ.
Southeast Missouri Transp. Service
Southeast Mo Reg. Port Auth.
Spirit Of St Louis Airport
Springfield Branson Regional
Springfield-Greene County
St Louis City
St Louis Community College
St Louis County-Parks & Recreation
Stoddard County Transit Service
Town Of Old Appleton
Union Pacific Railroad Company

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Unified Certification Process

The Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) requirements contained in 49 CFR Part 26 include a provision for a “one-stop” certification process. The process must be well defined and include all agencies that are recipients of federal funds from the U. S. Department of Transportation (USDOT).

Development of the UCP

The five agencies that receive direct USDOT funds and currently operate a USDOT approved DBE program are Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT), City of St. Louis, Missouri, Metro, Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA), and the City of Kansas City, Missouri and shall hereinafter be referred to as the “Direct Partners,” and shall constitute the members of the Missouri Regional Certification Committee (MRCC). All other Missouri agencies that receive indirect funding from the USDOT shall be referred to as “Sub-recipient Partners.”

The cooperation and efforts of all of the team members was key in the development of a UCP that all agencies could endorse. From the beginning, all participants actively worked to ensure cooperation and acknowledged that achieving the common goal was foremost. Participation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and Sub-recipients was essential for the successful implementation of any UCP developed. Several of those entities also volunteered to act as local assistance agencies in certifications, including availability for on-site reviews and firm contacts. The Sub-recipients who have agreed to assist in this process are:

- City of Columbia
- City of Springfield
- City Utilities of Springfield
- Mid America Reg. Council
- East/West Gateway Council of Governments
- Springfield Branson Regional Airport
- County Of Andrew
- County Of Putnam
- City Of Breckenridge Hills
- City Of Branson
- City Of West Plains
- City of St. Joseph

The specific Sub-recipients of highway and enhancement funds, which are administered by MoDOT, were identified. All Sub-recipients were contacted by mail and asked to submit a DBE plan or as an alternative, adopt MoDOT’s DBE program. The program was available for review on MoDOT’s website and was provided to any entity requesting a hard copy. By adopting MoDOT’s program, the Sub-recipients also agreed to accept the UCP developed. The Direct and Sub-recipient Partners developed the Unified Certification Program (UCP) agreement, , agreed to all of the terms contained in this document, and made a commitment to implementation. In order to accomplish the goals of the regulations and the MRCC, policies and procedures are required. Policies and procedures have been established and

incorporated herein as Attachment A. During the ratification process with the USDOT, MoDOT will act as the lead agency and has the ability to make revisions to the UCP proposal in order to meet any USDOT requirements or requested revisions. MoDOT will update and communicate with the MRCC Partners throughout this process.

Upon approval by the USDOT of this document, all parties agree to execute this agreement. While there are a large number of "Sub-recipients" within the state, including counties, cities, airports and other entities, it was not necessary to include all of those Sub-recipients in the development of the UCP. MoDOT will update and communicate with the MRCC Partners throughout this process.

Upon approval of the UCP process and agreement, all other recipients of any of the Partners will be asked to review and ratify the agreement, as well as make an affirmative statement of intent to comply. The recipients will be subject to administrative review by the MRCC, their lead agency, or any branch of the USDOT.

Joint certification documents were developed, including an application letter, notification correspondence and certificates for approvals of eligibility. The MRCC agrees to use the joint documents as well as the Uniform DBE Application mandated by USDOT on July 17, 2003.

Due to certain MoDOT constitutional limitations related to funding, it was agreed that a "Reciprocity" process would be the most effective way to accomplish the UCP. It was also agreed that the process would go beyond a mere reciprocity agreement. This solution allows each agency to maintain their staff and resources while achieving the requirements.

The Partners agreed on a process for assigning responsibility for certification to the participating Direct and Sub-recipients. While the Direct USDOT recipients will accept and process applications in their respective metropolitan areas, it may be burdensome for some recipients to travel to more rural sections of the state to conduct the required on-site visits. Therefore, rural certifications would remain the responsibility of MoDOT, as well as overall statewide certifications. However, it was decided that applicants in the transit or aviation services will be better served by an entity more familiar with their particular work type such as KCATA, Metro, City of St. Louis or City of Kansas City.

Furthermore, we understand and intend, according to the previously stated federal regulations, to have the Missouri UCP fully implemented within 18 months.

Unified Certification Agreement

It is acknowledged that all Partners agree to the procedures, processes and requirements set out in this document. Further, it is agreed that all certification and non-discrimination obligations and requirements of 49 CFR Part 26 will be carried out by the MRCC and no recipient, direct or indirect, may accept any other DBE, MBE or WBE Certification for use on USDOT funded projects. All certification decisions within the state will be made and agreed to by the MRCC.

The UCP will not establish, recommend, or alter any agencies' overall DBE Program, DBE goal or methodology other than to supplement an approved program submittal process. DBE goal development, administration, monitoring, and reporting remains the sole responsibility of the agency with a USDOT approved DBE Program in accordance with 49 CFR Part 26, subject to any oversight requirements of the lead agency. Any agency which elects not to establish a DBE Program as set forth in 49 CFR Part 26 will be required to adopt and implement the lead agency's program. The lead agency in Missouri is the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT), which is the funding agency for the majority of the recipient's USDOT federal funds.

All recipients of federal funds administered by the USDOT, either directly or indirectly, must ratify and comply with the UCP agreement. Failure to do so may result in the loss of federal funds from the MRCC Partners and/or the USDOT.

Communication

Sharing information on any matter related to the operation of the UCP is a core element of the process. All MRCC Partners agree to continue to communicate openly amongst each other. Communication can take the form of, but is not limited to, telephone conversations, conference calls, meetings, correspondence, electronic transmittals, and/or discussion databases.

If any MRCC Partner is in receipt of information that is necessary or critical to making a determination of DBE eligibility, the MRCC Partner shall notify and submit the appropriate information to the MRCC or any individual Partner agency. Each MRCC Partner shall be notified of all status changes affecting certifications. All MRCC Partners shall be notified in advance of all certification and denial actions of each MRCC Partner.

Response to any "media" queries related to the MRCC or its activities may be made by the agency contacted. That agency will respond in a manner that will not subject any individual Partner agency or the UCP to criticism. Such queries shall be reported to all of the Partner agencies within 24 hours.

Reciprocity

All Partners agree that they will not execute any reciprocity agreements with any other agency or entity, including city, county, state or federal agencies, binding that Partner, and subsequently the UCP, to a reciprocity agreement. The MRCC may elect to enter into a written reciprocity agreement with UCPs in other states or regions. The decision to execute such an agreement will be made by a majority vote of the Direct Partners of the MRCC – MoDOT, Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA), Metro, City of St. Louis and City of Kansas City.

Agency Compliance

The Partners acknowledge there are many agency specific issues related to their agency's certification processes. The primary areas of concern are:

- Political Influence Or Interference In Certification Decisions
- Incomplete Or Inadequate Definition Of Processes or Procedures
- Non-Compliance With 49 CFR Part 26
- Quality Of Decisions

All Partners further acknowledge that in order for the UCP to succeed and the partners to maintain the level of trust needed to effectively comply with the UCP requirements it is necessary to implement minimum requirements for compliance, as well as a process for dealing with any agency that is found to be in non-compliance. All partners agree that the specific minimum requirements are:

- All decisions related to certification **must** be and will be made in compliance with 49 CFR Part 26. All partners and parties acknowledge that this requires the political independence to make decisions based upon the specific eligibility requirements.
- All Partners, members and participants agree to cooperate fully with oversight, review and monitoring activities of the U. S. Department of Transportation and its operating administrations.
- All appeals or hearings **must** be decided by the MRCC, a third party who was not involved in the determination.
- Outside entities such as construction boards or other politically mandated organizations cannot, and will not, be involved in the certification determinations, investigations of third party challenges, or any administrative reconsideration or appeals.
- The MRCC Partners must have an approved DBE Program in place that clearly defines the role of the administrative staff. In addition, each Partner must have clearly defined written processes and procedures related to administration of the DBE Program and certification decisions.
- Any Partner with a DBE Program administered in conjunction with an MBE/WBE program must have the procedures and policies for the DBE program clearly separated and defined in writing. This includes eligibility requirements, data tracking, and removal/denial of certification.
- All Partners agree to make all decisions and recommendations on certification based purely upon the eligibility requirements, without consideration of political influence or factors.
- All Partners agree that there is no "emergency" certification, nor is there a provision within 49 CFR Part 26 for "conditional" certification. The eligibility requirements are to be determined with the factors present at the time of application and the decision is to be made in compliance with Part 26.
- All Partners agree to implement all USDOT directives and guidance.

If any MRCC Partner feels that a particular agency is not complying with the requirements of 49 CFR Part 26, they may make a written complaint to the MRCC. The MRCC will review the complaint and circumstances. If a majority of the MRCC Partners, not including the complaining agency or the agency in question, agrees that the agency is not complying with the requirements, remedial action will be taken. The remedial action can take the form of one of the following:

- **Written Findings** – The MRCC may issue a formal written determination of the issues regarding that agency’s certification, procedures, or practices. This determination will be sent to the senior management official or chief operating officer of the agency in question, the program administrator, and USDOT. It is hoped that the agency will review the procedures at issue and make improvements to the process in order to meet 49 CFR Part 26.
- **Monitoring & Concurrence** – The MRCC may issue a formal written determination as set out above, as well as provide a procedural review and concurrence process. It is the hope of the Partners that the agency in question will take this opportunity to gain additional knowledge and education of the regulations and requirements.

The agency in question will be required to gain MRCC concurrence in certification determinations for a specific period of time. Depending upon the situation, the MRCC may choose to “pair” the agency with another MRCC Partner or it may choose to require concurrence by a majority of the MRCC Partners. If an agency is paired with another agency and a dispute continues to exist, the MRCC will make the final determination.

- **Non-Compliance** – Should the MRCC make every effort to correct the deficiencies in an agency’s certification process, extreme measures may be necessary. The MRCC may find that an agency is not acting in good faith and determine that the UCP will not accept firms certified by that agency until the required changes are implemented.

The MRCC recognizes that this is a method of last resort and would not apply this remedy liberally. In addition, the MRCC would not proceed with this remedy without notification to the USDOT, as well as the lead federal agency for the Partner agency. The MRCC further agrees that should the USDOT or the lead federal agency wish to assist or provide guidance on resolution, the MRCC would make every effort to resolve the situation prior to implementing this remedy.

Resources

All MRCC Partners agree that the resources necessary to accomplish the goals of 49 CFR Part 26, as well as those of the UCP agreement, must be present. It is not within the scope of this committee’s responsibility or charge to dictate to the individual agencies the level of funding or resources necessary. All parties agree that an adequate level of funds, personnel, equipment and other resources must be in place to comply with the requirements contained in 49 CFR Part 26; [however the individual agency processes will not change therefore we do not expect funding to be a problem](#). If at any time, the MRCC, any Partner, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Aviation Administration or the U.S. Department of Transportation conclude that one or more of the Partners does not have sufficient resources in place to ensure compliance, a written notification should be sent to the Direct partners, as well as the Office of Civil Rights for the FHWA, FTA, FAA and USDOT.

Training

All MRCC Partners recognize the need for continued training for staff members, as well as recipients and agency management personnel. The MRCC Partners will embark upon ongoing in-service opportunities in order to update the Partners, as well as the staff members. Many of these opportunities may be in conjunction with other UCPs, states, or entities.

The Partners agree that all agencies and staff members must complete a minimum of one training session within one year of the UCP ratification. In addition, any new staff members will complete training within a reasonable time from date of hire, not to exceed one year. The training session must be specifically aimed at DBE certification in compliance with 49 CFR Part 26 and sponsored by an agency that administers a program in compliance with those regulations. The training can also be sponsored by any USDOT agency including, FHWA, FTA, or FAA. If new DBE regulations or revisions are published, the MRCC Partners agree to sponsor a joint training session to update the agencies and staff members.

The Partners agree to develop and maintain a series of training sessions aimed at improving the certification processes of the various Partners, as well as provide for consistent eligibility determinations. The MRCC will seek the assistance of the USDOT, FTA, FHWA, FAA and any other agency to provide guidance and training. The MRCC will seek continued training sponsorship from the Partners in conjunction with any contracts that may be in place. If there are no contracts in place, the Partners agree to rotate the duties for planning and conducting the yearly training session.

Supportive Services

The MRCC Partners agree that the efforts of all of the agencies could be combined to provide additional and meaningful training to all of the DBE firms. The Partners agree to develop a communication effort to ensure that all agencies are notified of the upcoming training and given an opportunity to assist in the training and development activities.

Joint efforts to improve the viability of DBE firms are encouraged. The Partners agree that combined resources and joint opportunities to provide technical assistance benefit the DBE firms and all agencies. In addition, the Partners agree to seek out opportunities to “pilot” or develop innovative ideas to increase the success of DBE firms.

Data Requirements

One of the major issues necessary for detailing the certification status, DBE Directory development and maintaining communication between the Partners is the data requirements and facilities. MoDOT agreed to place the tracking and reporting DBE certification requests database outside of its external firewall on a separate server. The Direct Partners will then be responsible for maintaining the data related to the firms they certify and maintain. Those agencies will be granted database access through the Internet to make updates, revisions and additions. It is agreed that the database will also generate notices to each agency, create the DBE Directory, include a discussion database and notify the agencies of upcoming action needed.

MoDOT will be the database manager and continue to work to develop the common database, including agency specific reporting needs and download capabilities. The MRCC Partners agree that all changes, updates, additions or deletions to a specific firm’s record

would be made in a timely manner. Specifically all changes will be made within two working days of the action.

The DBE Directory will be available in real time online through this system, as well as available for printing, as necessary, by each agency.

MRCC Meetings

The MRCC shall hold a meeting each month. Frequency of the MRCC meetings is subject to change upon action by the committee. Notification of any such changes will be made in advance. The MRCC's meetings are "open" meetings within the requirements of state law. Each agency shall post advance notice of meetings in a location open to the public. The meetings will not be advertised in any publication or other medium. The meeting agenda will be set 30 days prior to a regularly scheduled meeting and will be posted by each agency at least 24 hours in advance of the scheduled meeting. The meeting notice will include a contact person and telephone number.

A majority of the Direct Partners is needed for a quorum. Only the official designated representative, or an approved alternate, from each Direct Partner agency may vote. All votes will be recorded. If the vote is not unanimous, each member's specific name and vote will be recorded. Minutes may be available for public viewing upon request.

Initial Consolidation

The MRCC shall institute a limited, one time only "grandfather clause" that may grant DBE certification to firms currently certified by agencies that administer programs under the USDOT and 49 CFR Part 26. Those agencies are MoDOT, City of St. Louis, KCATA, and the City of Kansas City. This does not include firms certified as a DBE, MBE or WBE by any city, state, federal agency, or any other entity who does not comply with 49 CFR Part 26, as determined by the MRCC. If any agency that does not currently certify DBE firms under 49 CFR Part 26 or any other program, wishes to participate in the MRCC, the MRCC Partners must approve its participation in the same manner as required for reciprocity with other regional UCPs. The agreement must be amended to reflect the addition of the agency and the responsibilities.

Each UCP Partner must present a list of their certified firms in alphabetical order that shall become part of the initial UCP database. Information on each firm should include address, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address, website address, and owner's name(s). This list must be submitted in hard copy format and via electronically on an Excel spreadsheet. A master list of all certified firms will be generated and electronic and hard copies distributed to each UCP Partner. Each UCP Partner shall also present a list of pending firms (firms that have submitted application for certification but the partner has not completed its certification review).

The MRCC shall hold the consolidation meeting, in which a majority of the MRCC members is needed for a quorum. The MRCC may elect a Chairperson to conduct the grandfathering process. The grandfathering process is not intended to be burdensome and any additional certification reviews shall be evenly distributed among the members.

Any firms that are not certified with all agencies, or any firm in which a MRCC Partner challenges in writing, will be reviewed in order to determine continued eligibility under 49 CFR Part 26. The MRCC operates as the entity to determine whether the challenging agency has met the burden of proof for removal of certification.

Any written challenge must be submitted to each MRCC representative and the firm being challenged within 10 working days of the consolidation meeting. The notice must include the specific grounds asserted for removal of DBE eligibility contained in 49 CFR Part 26. The notice to the challenged firm must be sent by certified mail. The MRCC will set a date to review the challenge. The challenged firm may appear in person at that time, however, they are not required to do so.

The challenging agency will have 30 days to review the firm and provide any additional documentation to the MRCC representatives and the challenged firm. The challenged firm will then have 30 days to submit a response and any documents necessary to rebut the assertions. The challenged firm must also notify the MRCC at that time if they intend to appear in person and if they are going to be represented by counsel. While legal counsel may accompany the firm during the MRCC hearing, only the controlling owner may speak on behalf of the firm, respond to questions from the MRCC members or otherwise make a presentation.

The hearing on certification eligibility is an open meeting and the challenged DBE firm shall be given an opportunity to present evidence. Each owner will be limited to a period of five (5) minutes to address the MRCC committee. Reasonable accommodations will be made for those with disabilities.

The MRCC will review the written request of the challenging agency, any information submitted, the certification file, evidence or documentation submitted by the DBE firm, and any other documentation provided. A motion must first be made to accept the firm and a second to the motion is required. Discussion may be held regarding the firm, if warranted. A final vote will then be taken after discussion has ended in order to render the MRCC's final determination as to whether or not the firm meets the eligibility requirements. A majority of the affirmative vote is needed to approve the firm's eligibility as a DBE.

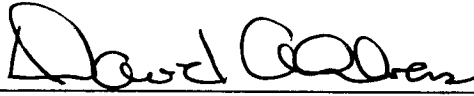
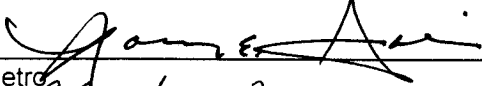


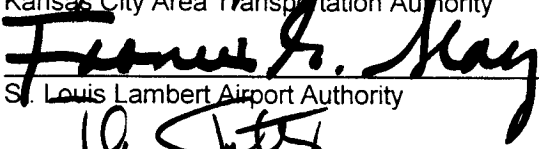

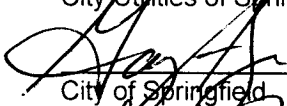
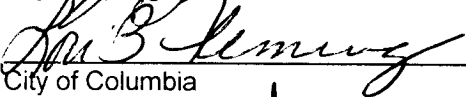
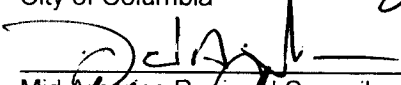

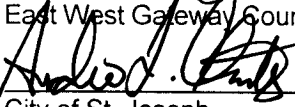

If the MRCC finds reasonable cause does not exist for removal of eligibility, the MRCC will notify the challenged firm, in writing, of this determination and will then grandfather the firm into the UCP. The final decision will be made in writing and rendered publicly. An administrative record will be developed and supplemented as necessary by the MRCC. Written action by the MRCC is final and the firm may appeal the determination to the USDOT, as set out in the section on appeals.

After the initial consolidation only those firms certified as meeting the eligibility requirements as set out in 49 CFR 26 shall be recognized as certified by the MRCC. Any MRCC Partner that has concerns regarding any firm may file a Third Party Challenge. That challenge will be treated in the manner set out in the section titled Third Party Challenges.

New Recipients

Any USDOT agency located in the state of Missouri, whether a direct or sub-recipient of DOT funds, and is not party to the initial consolidation process shall be considered a new recipient. New recipients must have a USDOT approved DBE program as specified in 49 CFR Part 26. All new recipients must become signatories to the Missouri UCP Agreement and comply with its provisions.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have read and agreed to the terms contained herein. The parties have further caused this Unified Certification Proposal to be executed by their respective proper officials:

 Missouri Department of Transportation	<u>8.17.05</u> Date
 Metro	<u>6-6-05</u> Date
 City of Kansas City, Missouri	<u>03/25/05</u> Date
 Kansas City Area Transportation Authority	<u>03/22/2005</u> Date
 St. Louis Lambert Airport Authority	<u>10/07/05</u> Date
 City Utilities of Springfield	<u>4/25/05</u> Date
 City of Springfield	<u>5-18-08</u> Date
 City of Columbia	<u>5/23/05</u> Date
 Mid America Regional Council	<u>3/31/05</u> Date
 East West Gateway Council of Governments	<u>6/7/05</u> Date
 City of St. Joseph	<u>4/14/05</u> Date
 City of Joplin	<u>4-14-05</u> Date

ATTACHMENT A

UCP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

DBE Certification Determinations

The MRCC shall review and make an eligibility determination on all firms applying for DBE certification whose business is located in the State of Missouri, including those firms with headquarters in another state but maintain a branch office in the State of Missouri. The MRCC shall accept applications from firms located across state lines, only if the place of business is located within a reasonable distance so that a site visit may be performed by the MRCC.

Applicant firms that are located outside the State of Missouri must be DBE certified in their home state by a USDOT funded certifying agency. The out of state DBE firm must submit a "Verification of Site Visit" (Attachment E) form. The DBE firm must ensure that the USDOT funded certifying agency completes and submits the form and returns it to the MRCC along with a copy of the site visit report.

The MRCC Partners in the St. Louis area shall review applicant firms that are located in the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes St. Louis City, St. Louis County, Jefferson County, St. Charles County, Lincoln County, Warren County and Franklin County.

The MRCC Partners in the Kansas City area shall review applicant firms that are located in the Kansas City MSA, which includes Kansas City, Jackson County, Cass County, Clay County, Platte County, and Ray County.

MoDOT will review applicant firms statewide. The MRCC Partners agree that after the geographical area has been ascertained, the applications would be divided by industry or primary market.

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Certification is the process by which all firms seeking to participate in the Missouri Regional Certification Committee's (MRCC) DBE Program are determined to have met the requirements set forth in 49 CFR Part 26. This guidance provides the policies and procedures of the MRCC for certifying firms as DBE's. These policies and/or procedures are not all inclusive, and therefore, reference to 49 CFR Part 26 is required.

Airport Concession Designation

The MRCC shall review and make an eligibility determination on applicant firms that are participating or seeking opportunities to participate in airport concession related activities at Lambert-St. Louis International Airport or Kansas City International Airport, regardless of where the firm is located. The City of Kansas City and the City of St. Louis will perform the review of eligibility for DBE certification of applicant firms that are seeking airport concession opportunities or are participating in airport concession activities at their respective facilities.

Industry or Market Designation

After the geographical area of the applying firm has been designated, the firm's primary type of work or industry will be ascertained by the agency reviewing the submission. The MRCC Partners agreed to divide the applicants in accordance with the firms' primary industry or market. Specifically the Partners agree to industry designations in the following manner:

- Metro & KCATA will review applicants that are primarily transit oriented services or products. These may include, but are not limited to, transit services, maintenance services, maintenance products or transportation services.

All MRCC Partners agree that there may be exceptions to assignments based upon familiarity with the firm, historical knowledge, or resources.

SIC/NAICS Codes

The MRCC agrees to certify all firms in compliance with 49 CFR Part 26, including designating specific work types. The Partners agree to use the SIC/NAIC codes for those designations. All firms will be informed of the specific codes and a short narrative description of that designation.

Any firm may request modification and/or additions to their approved codes by making a written request to the certifying Partner. That request must include the equipment and experience indicating the firm's ability to perform the particular work type. In addition, the firm must submit documentation of past contracts on which the firm has performed the specific type of work.

Burdens of Proof

In accordance with 49 CFR Part 26.61, the firm seeking certification has the burden of demonstrating to the MRCC, by a preponderance of the evidence, that it meets the requirements concerning group membership or individual disadvantage, business size, ownership and control.

- (1) The MRCC will rebuttably presume that members of the designated groups identified herein are socially disadvantaged. Where the presumption does not apply or has been rebutted, the individuals have the burden of proving, by a preponderance of the evidence, that they are socially disadvantaged. The applicant also has the burden of proof to demonstrate economic disadvantaged status based upon the requirement for personal net worth contained in 49 CFR Part 26.
- (2) The MRCC will make determinations concerning whether individuals and firms have met the burden of demonstrating group membership, ownership, control, and social and economic disadvantage by considering all the facts in the record, viewed as a whole.

Group Membership Determinations

Pursuant to 49 CFR Part 26.63, if the MRCC has reason to question whether an individual is a member of a group presumed to be socially disadvantaged, the MRCC will require the individual to demonstrate, by a preponderance of the evidence, that he/she is a member of such group. In making that determination, the MRCC will consider whether or not the person has held himself/herself out to be a member of the group over a long period of time prior to application for certification and whether the relevant community regards the person as a member of the group.

The MRCC may require the applicant to produce appropriate documentation of group membership. If the MRCC determines an individual claiming to be a member of a group presumed disadvantaged is not a member of such group, the individual must demonstrate social and economic disadvantage on an individual basis. The MRCC's

decision concerning membership in a designated group will be subject to the certification appeal procedures.

Social Disadvantage

- (1) Any individual who a recipient finds to be a socially and economically disadvantaged individual on a case-by-case basis.
- (2) The MRCC will rebuttably presume that citizens of the United States (or lawfully admitted permanent residents) who are women, Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian-Pacific Americans, Subcontinent Asian Americans, or other minorities found disadvantaged by the Small Business Administration are socially disadvantaged individuals. The definitions of those groups are set out in the Appendix, attached and incorporated by reference.

Economic Disadvantage

Economically disadvantaged individuals are those who have been determined to have an individual personal net worth below the \$750,000 cap set out in 49 CFR Part 26.67. The MRCC requires submission of financial information from each individual claiming economic disadvantage. The MRCC may attribute to any individual claiming disadvantaged status any assets which that individual has transferred to an immediate family member, trust, or beneficiary within the prior one (1) year of the concern's application.

Pursuant to 49 CFR Part 26.67, the MRCC will require each individual owner of a firm applying to participate as a DBE and whose ownership interest is relied upon for DBE certification to submit a signed, notarized certification or affidavit that each presumptively disadvantaged owner is, in fact, socially and economically disadvantaged.

Pursuant to 49 CFR Part 26.67, the MRCC will require each individual owner of a firm applying to participate as a DBE and whose ownership interest is relied upon for DBE certification to submit a signed, notarized statement of personal net worth with appropriate supporting documentation that each presumptively disadvantaged owner is, in fact, economically disadvantaged. In determining net worth, the MRCC will exclude an individual's ownership interest in the applicant firm and the individual's equity in his/her primary residence (except any portion of such equity that is attributable to excessive withdrawals from the applicant firm).

If an individual's Statement of Personal Net Worth shows the individual's personal net worth to exceed \$750,000, the individual's presumption of economic disadvantage will be rebutted. The MRCC is not required to have a proceeding in order to rebut the presumption of economic disadvantage.

If the MRCC has a reasonable basis to believe that an individual who is a member of one of the designated groups is not, in fact, socially and/or economically disadvantaged the MRCC may, at any time, start a proceeding to determine whether the presumption should be regarded as rebutted with respect to that individual. The MRCC must follow the procedures set forth in 49 CFR Part 26.87. The MRCC may require the individual to produce additional information relevant to the determination of his/her disadvantage.

When an individual's presumption of social and/or economic disadvantage has been rebutted, his/her ownership and control of the firm cannot be used for purposes of DBE eligibility unless, and until, he/she makes an individual showing of social and/or economic disadvantage. If the basis for rebutting the presumption is a determination that the individual's personal net worth exceeds \$750,000, the individual is no longer eligible for participation in the Program and cannot regain eligibility by making an individual showing of disadvantage.

Individual Determinations of Social and/or Economic Disadvantage

Pursuant to 49 CFR Part 26.67, firms owned and controlled by individuals who are not presumed to be socially and economically disadvantaged (including individuals whose presumed disadvantage has been rebutted) may be certified by the MRCC on a case-by-case basis. The MRCC will determine whether each individual whose ownership and control are relied upon for DBE certification is socially and economically disadvantaged. In such a proceeding, the applicant firm must demonstrate, by a preponderance of the evidence, that each of the individuals who own and control it are socially and economically disadvantaged. An individual whose personal net worth exceeds \$750,000 will not be determined to be economically disadvantaged. The MRCC will use guidance in Appendix E of 49 CFR Part 26.

Business Size Determinations

In accordance with 49 CFR Part 26.65, in order to be an eligible DBE, a firm (including its affiliates) must be an existing small business as defined by SBA standards. The MRCC will apply current SBA business size standards found in 13 CFR Part 121 appropriate to the type(s) of work the firm seeks to perform on federally funded contracts.

Although a firm may meet the SBA business size requirements, the firm may not be an eligible DBE. Any applicant, including its affiliates, may not have average annual gross receipts, as defined by SBA regulations, exceeding \$17.42 million over the previous three fiscal years. The Secretary of Transportation may adjust the \$17.42 million cap for inflation from time to time. In any case the applicant firms' average annual gross receipts cannot exceed the lesser of either the SBA Size Standard for the work category or \$17.42 million, as adjusted.

The above size standards do not apply to airport concessionaires, which are set forth in 49 CFR Part 23 subpart F.

Ownership Determinations

In accordance with 49 CFR Part 26.69, in determining whether the socially and economically disadvantaged participants in a firm own the firm, the MRCC will consider all the facts in the record, viewed as a whole at the time of application.

To be an eligible DBE, a firm must be at least 51 percent owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individual(s). The firm's ownership by socially and economically disadvantaged individual(s) must be real, substantial and continuing, going beyond pro forma ownership of the firm as reflected in the ownership documents. The disadvantaged owner(s) must enjoy the customary incidents of ownership and share in the risks and profits commensurate with their ownership interests, as demonstrated by the substance, not merely the form, of arrangements.

In the case of a corporation, such individual(s) must own at least 51 percent of each class of voting stock outstanding and at least 51 percent of the aggregate of all stock outstanding.

In the case of a partnership, at least 51 percent of each class of partnership interest must be owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individual(s) and must be reflected in the firm's partnership agreement.

In the case of a limited liability company, at least a socially and economically disadvantaged individual(s) must own 51 percent of each class of member interest.

All securities that constitute ownership must be held directly by disadvantaged person(s). Except as provided in 49 CFR Part 26.69(d), no securities or assets held in trust, or by any guardian for a minor, are considered as held by a disadvantaged person(s) in determining ownership of a firm.

Capital Contribution

The contributions of capital or expertise by the socially and economically disadvantaged individual(s) to acquire ownership interests must be real and substantial. In addition, the individual whose expertise is relied upon must have a significant financial investment in the firm.

In a situation in which an individual's expertise is relied upon as part of the individual(s) contribution to acquire ownership, the expertise must meet the following requirements:

- In a specialized field
- Of outstanding quality
- In area(s) critical to the firm's operations
- Indispensable to the firm's potential success
- Specific to the type of work the firm performs
- Documented in the records of the firm.

For purposes of determining ownership, the MRCC will deem as held by a socially and economically disadvantaged individual all interests in a business or other assets obtained by the individual in the following manner(s):

- As the result of a final property settlement or court order in a divorce or legal separation
- Through inheritance or otherwise because of the death of the former owner

The MRCC will presume as not being held by a socially and economically disadvantaged individual, for purposes of determining ownership, all interests in a business or other assets obtained by the individual as the result of a gift or transfer, without adequate consideration, from any non-disadvantaged individual or non-DBE firm which is:

- Involved in the same firm for which the individual is seeking certification, or an affiliate of that firm
- Involved in the same or a similar line of business
- Engaged in an ongoing business relationship with the firm, or an affiliate of the firm, for which the individual is seeking certification

To overcome the foregoing presumption and permit the interests or assets to be counted, the disadvantaged individual must demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that:

- The gift or transfer was made for reasons other than obtaining certification as a DBE
- The disadvantaged individual actually controls the management, policy, and operations of the firm, notwithstanding the continuing participation of a non-disadvantaged individual who provided the gift or transfer

The MRCC will apply all of the following rules in situations in which marital assets form a basis for ownership of a firm:

- When marital assets (other than the assets of the business in question), held jointly or as community property by both spouses, are used to acquire the ownership interests asserted by one spouse, the MRCC will deem ownership interest in the firm to have been acquired by that spouse with his/her individual resources
- The other spouse must irrevocably renounce and transfer all rights in the ownership interest in applicant firm in the manner sanctioned by the laws of the state in which either spouse or the firm is domiciled
- The MRCC will not count a greater portion of joint or community property assets toward ownership than state law would recognize as belonging to the socially and economically disadvantaged individual(s) of the firm
- A copy of the document legally transferring and renouncing the other spouse's rights in the jointly owned or community assets used to acquire an ownership interest in the firm must be included as part of the firm's application for DBE certification

The MRCC may consider the following factors in determining the ownership of a firm, but will not regard a contribution of capital as failing to be real and substantial nor find a firm ineligible, solely because:

- A socially and economically disadvantaged individual acquired his or her ownership interests as the result of a gift or transfer without adequate consideration other than the types set forth above
- There is a provision for the co-signature of a spouse who is not a socially and economically disadvantaged individual on financing agreements, contracts for the purchase or sale of real or personal property, bank signature cards, or other documents
- Ownership of the firm in question or its assets is transferred for inadequate consideration from a spouse who is not a socially and economically disadvantaged individual to a spouse who is such an individual. In this case, the MRCC will give particularly close and careful scrutiny to the ownership and control of the firm to ensure that it is owned and controlled, in substance as well as in form, by the socially and economically disadvantaged individual

Control Determinations

In accordance with 49 CFR Part 26.71, in determining whether socially and economically disadvantaged owners control a firm, the MRCC will consider all the facts in the record, viewed as a whole at the time of application.

Only an independent business may be certified as a DBE. An independent business is one in which viability does not depend on its relationship with another firm or firms. In determining whether a potential DBE is an independent business, the MRCC will scrutinize relationships with non-DBE firms in such areas as personnel, facilities, equipment, financial and/or bonding support, and other resources. The MRCC will consider present or recent employer/employee relationships, the firm's relationship with prime contractors, and other factors related to the independence of a potential DBE firm.

Further, the MRCC will consider the consistency of relationships between the potential DBE and non-DBE firms with normal industry practice.

A DBE firm must not be subject to any formal or informal restrictions which limit the customary discretion of the socially and economically disadvantaged owners. The socially and economically disadvantaged owners must possess the power to direct or cause the direction of the management and policies of the firm and to make day-to-day, as well as long-term, decisions on matters of management, policy and operations.

In a corporation, disadvantaged owners must control the Board of Directors. In addition, the disadvantaged owner must hold the highest officer position in the company (e.g. chief executive officer or president). In a partnership, one or more disadvantaged individual must serve as general partner(s) with control over all partnership decisions.

Individuals who are not socially and economically disadvantaged may be involved in a DBE firm as owners, managers, employees, stockholders, officers, and/or directors. Such individuals must not possess or exercise the power to control the firm, or be disproportionately responsible for the operation of the firm. The socially and economically disadvantaged owners may delegate various areas of management, policymaking, or daily operations of the firm to other participants in the firm, regardless of whether these participants are socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. Such delegations of authority must be revocable, and the socially and economically disadvantaged owners must retain the power to hire and fire any person to whom such authority is delegated.

The socially and economically disadvantaged individuals controlling a firm may use an employee leasing company. This does not preclude such individuals from controlling their firm if they continue to maintain an employer-employee relationship with the leased employees, including responsibility for hiring, firing, training, assigning, and otherwise controlling on-the-job activities of the employees as well as ultimate responsibility for wage and tax obligations related to the employees.

The managerial role of the socially and economically disadvantaged owner(s) in the firm's overall affairs must be such that the MRCC can reasonably conclude that the socially and economically disadvantaged owner(s) actually exercise control over the firm's operations, management and policy.

The socially and economically disadvantaged owners must have an overall understanding of the business, as well as managerial and technical competence directly related to the type of business in which the firm is engaged, and the firm's operations.

If the state or local law requires the person(s) to have a particular license or other credential in order to own and/or control a certain type of firm, the socially and economically disadvantaged owner must possess the required license or credential.

The MRCC will consider differences in compensation between socially and economically disadvantaged owners and other participants in the firm, in the context of the duties involved, normal industry practices, and the firm's policies and practices.

In order to be viewed as controlling the firm, a socially and economically disadvantaged owner cannot engage in outside employment or other business interests which conflict with the management of the firm or prevent the individual from devoting sufficient time and attention to the affairs of the firm.

A socially and economically disadvantaged individual may control the firm even though one or more of the individual's immediate family members (who themselves are not socially and economically disadvantaged individuals) participate in the firm. If the MRCC cannot determine that the socially and economically disadvantaged owners, as distinct from the family as a whole, control the firm, then the socially and economically disadvantaged owner(s) have failed to carry the burden of proof concerning control even though they may participate significantly in the firm's activities.

Where a firm was formerly owned and/or controlled by a non-disadvantaged individual (whether or not an immediate family member) and ownership and/or control were transferred to a socially and economically disadvantaged individual, and the non-disadvantaged individual remains involved with the firm in any capacity, the disadvantaged individual now owning the firm must demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the transfer of ownership and/or control was made for reasons other than obtaining certification as a DBE. The disadvantaged individual must actually control the management, policy, and operations of the firm, notwithstanding the continuing participation of a non-disadvantaged individual who formerly owned and/or controlled the firm.

In determining whether a firm is controlled by it's a socially and economically disadvantaged owner(s), the MRCC will consider whether the firm owns equipment necessary to perform its work. The MRCC will not determine that a firm has failed to demonstrate that it is controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals solely because the firm leases, rather than owns, such equipment, where leasing equipment is a normal industry practice and the lease does not involve a relationship with a prime contractor, or other party that compromises the independence of the firm.

The MRCC will grant certification to a firm only for specific types of work in which the socially and economically disadvantaged owners have demonstrated the ability to control the firm. To become certified in an additional type of work, the firm must demonstrate only that its socially and economically disadvantaged owners are able to control the firm with respect to that type of work. The MRCC will not require that the firm be renewed or submit a new application for certification but will verify the disadvantaged owner's control of the firm and the additional type of work.

The MRCC may certify a business operating under a franchise or license agreement if it meets the standards in 49 CFR Part 26 Subpart D, and the franchiser or licensor is not affiliated with the franchisee or licensee. In determining whether affiliation exists, the MRCC will generally not consider restraints relating to standardized quality, advertising, accounting format, and other provisions imposed by the franchise agreement or license, provided the franchisee or licensee has the right to profit from its efforts and bears the risk of loss commensurate with ownership.

In order for a partnership to be controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, any non-disadvantaged partners must not have the power, without the specific written concurrence of the socially and economically disadvantaged partner, to contractually bind the partnership or subject the partnership to contract or tort liability.

Other Considerations

Commercially Useful Function

Except as provided below, the MRCC will not consider commercially useful function issues in making decisions about whether to certify a firm as a DBE. Consideration of whether a firm performs a commercially useful function or is a regular dealer pertains solely to counting toward DBE goals any participation of firms, which have already been certified as DBEs.

- Pattern of Conduct - In making certification decisions, the MRCC will consider whether a firm has exhibited a pattern of conduct indicating its involvement in attempts to evade or subvert the intent or requirements of the DBE program.

Present Circumstances

The MRCC will evaluate the eligibility of a firm on the basis of present circumstances and will not refuse to certify a firm based solely on historical information indicating lack of ownership or control by socially and economically disadvantaged individual(s) at some time in the past, if the firm currently meets ownership and control standards. The MRCC will not refuse to certify a firm solely on the basis that it is a newly formed firm.

DBE Cooperation

The MRCC expects all participants in the MRCC's DBE Program, including DBE firms and firms seeking DBE certification, to cooperate fully with requests for information relevant to the certification process, as well as any other requests for information from the USDOT. Failure or refusal to provide such information is grounds for denial, removal of certification or any other remedies as may be provided by 49 CFR Part 26.109 (c).

For-Profit Firms

Only firms organized for profit may be eligible as a DBE. Not-for-profit organizations, though controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, are not eligible to be certified as DBE's.

Subsidiaries and Affiliates

An eligible DBE firm must be owned by individuals who are socially and economically disadvantaged. Except as provided by this policy and in 49 CFR Part 26.73 (e), a firm

that is not owned by such individuals, but instead is owned by another firm, even a DBE firm, cannot be an eligible DBE. If a socially and economically disadvantaged individual(s) owns and controls a firm through a parent or holding company, established for tax, capitalization, or other purposes consistent with industry practice, and the parent or holding company, in turn, holds and controls an operating subsidiary, the MRCC may certify the subsidiary if it otherwise meets all requirements of 49 CFR Part 26. This includes the requirement that there be cumulatively at least 51 percent ownership of the subsidiary by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. In this situation, the individual owners and controllers of the parent or holding company are deemed to control the subsidiary through the parent or holding company.

Recognition of a business as a separate entity for tax or corporate purposes is not necessarily sufficient to demonstrate that a firm is an independent business, owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

Pre-qualification for Bidding

The MRCC will not require that a DBE firm be pre-qualified as a condition for certification unless the MRCC requires all firms that participate in its contracts and subcontracts, or in a particular contract or subcontract be pre-qualified.

Tribal Organizations

The MRCC recognizes that a firm owned by an Indian tribe, Alaska Native Corporation, or Native Hawaiian organization as an entity, rather than by Indians, Alaska Natives, or Native Hawaiians as individuals, may be eligible for certification as long as such firm meets the size standards and is controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

DBE Certification Procedures

In accordance with 49 CFR Part 26.83, the MRCC will ensure that only firms certified as eligible DBEs participate in the DBE Program. The MRCC will determine the eligibility of firms as DBEs consistent with the standards of 49 CFR Part 26, Subpart D.

Applicants are evaluated on the basis of documentation in existence at the time of application. Any changes in ownership and control after the date of the application will not be considered. These changes include, but are not limited to, execution of new agreements, board or shareholders' resolutions, memoranda of understanding, consolidation, liquidation, reorganization, merger, election of new officers or directors, appointment of new principals or key personnel or the purchase or sale of shares or issuance of new shares.

The MRCC will require potential DBEs to complete and submit an appropriate application form. The MRCC will assure that the applicant attests to the accuracy and truthfulness of the information on the application form. This will be done either in the form of an affidavit sworn to by the applicant before a person authorized by state law to administer oaths or in the form of an unsworn declaration executed under penalty of perjury of the laws of the United States. The MRCC will review all information on the form prior to making a decision about the DBE eligibility of the firm.

The desk audit is that part of the certification procedure at which all of the applicant's submissions are reviewed for internal consistency, accuracy and conformity with the eligibility standards set forth in Federal Regulations, 49CFR part 26.

The MRCC may request additional information if there is insufficient evidence upon which to base a determination. No action will be taken on an application until all items have been submitted. Applicants who fail or refuse to submit information deemed necessary for certification review will not be certified. If any information requested is not available or applicable, the applicant must provide a written explanation.

The MRCC will notify the applicant of information necessary and will give 10 working days for submittal of the information, or a reasonable justification for delay. If the information or justification is not received within 10 working days, the MRCC will issue a final request by certified mail. The final request will provide for submission of the information within 5 working days. Failure to submit the requested information at the end of the 5 days will result in denial of the firm's DBE application. The firm may appeal this determination to the USDOT, as provided for in 49 CFR Part 26.89.

Any applicant who wishes to apply for certification whose file has been closed or denied must follow the procedures for initial application.

The MRCC will take all of the following steps in determining whether a DBE firm meets the eligibility standards set forth in 49 CFR Part 26:

- Conduct an on-site visit to the office(s) of the firm, interview the principal(s) and review their resumes and/or work histories
- Conduct visits to job sites when possible
- In certain circumstances, may rely upon the site visit reports of any other USDOT funded agency or UCP
- Analyze the ownership of stock, partnership agreements, and/or operating agreements in the firm, as well as any other documents related to organizational structure
- Analyze the bonding and financial capacity of the firm
- Determine the work history of the firm, including contracts received, and work completed
- Determine the type of work for which the firm will receive DBE participation credit
- Verify the firm's preferred location(s) for performing the work
- Obtain a list of equipment owned by or available to the firm
- Obtain a copy of the firm's, and/or key personnel's, license(s) necessary to perform the work it seeks as part of the DBE Program

When another USDOT funded agency or UCP makes a written request to the MRCC for information related to an application for DBE certification, the MRCC will make the information available.

When another USDOT funded agency or UCP has certified a firm, the MRCC has the discretion to take any of the following actions:

- Accept another agency or UCP's certification decision and certify the firm, upon MRCC approval as set forth in the UCP agreement
- Make a certification decision based on documentation provided by the other agency or UCP augmented by any additional information required by the MRCC
- Require the applicant to go through the MRCC's application process without regard to the action of other agencies or UCP's

The MRCC may choose to take any of the above actions in relation to a certification decision made by a non-USDOT funded agency, upon a majority vote of the MRCC.

The MRCC will make decisions on applications for DBE certification within ninety (90) days of receiving all required information from the applicant. The MRCC may extend this time period once, for no more than an additional sixty (60) days, upon written notice to the firm explaining the reasons for the extension.

The MRCC will not impose an application fee for firms to participate in the DBE certification process.

Once the MRCC has certified a firm as a DBE, it will remain certified for a period of at least three (3) years unless and until its certification has been removed. The MRCC will not require DBEs to reapply for certification as a condition of continuing to participate in the Program during this three-year period unless the factual basis on which the DBE certification was made changes. All firms certified by the MRCC will be included in the MRCC DBE Directory and database.

The MRCC shall safeguard from disclosure from unauthorized persons all information gathered as part of the certification process that may be regarded as proprietary or other confidential business information, consistent with applicable federal, state and local laws, unless applicant authorizes such disclosure.

DBE Certification Continuing Eligibility

The Direct Partners and the MRCC agree that it is the responsibility of the certifying agency to notify DBE firms of the due date of the annual update. In addition, the certifying agency will update all data related to the annual update in the database designated by the MRCC. All partners are responsible for monitoring the compliance of DBE firms, however, it is the primary responsibility of the certifying agency to ensure firms give the necessary notification of any change in circumstances affecting the firm's ability to meet the size, disadvantaged

status, ownership, or control requirements or any material change in the information provided in the application. All Partners, recipients and sub-recipients agree to certify all firms in compliance with 49 CFR Part 26, including designating specific work types. The Partners agree to use the SIC/NAIC codes for those designations.

Once certified, a DBE firm must inform the MRCC in writing of any changes in circumstances affecting the firm's ability to meet size, disadvantaged status, ownership, or control requirements, or any material change in the information provided in the certification application process. The statement must include supporting documentation describing in detail the nature of such changes. Changes in management responsibility among members of a limited liability company are also covered by this requirement.

The notice of change from the DBE firm must take the form of an affidavit sworn to before a person authorized by state law to administer oaths, or of an unsworn declaration executed under penalty of perjury of the laws of the United States. The written notification must be provided by the DBE within thirty (30) days of the date of the change(s). If the DBE fails to make timely notification of such change(s), it will be deemed to have failed to cooperate and certification may be removed as set forth in 49 CFR Part 26.109(c).

If a certified firm notifies the MRCC of a change in its circumstances, and the MRCC determines there is reasonable cause to believe the firm is ineligible, the MRCC will provide written notice setting forth the reasons for the proposed determination. The findings must specifically reference the evidence in the record upon which the decision is based.

On the 1st and 2nd anniversary dates of DBE certification, every firm must provide the MRCC an affidavit sworn to by the firm's owners before a person who is authorized by state law to administer oaths or an unsworn declaration executed under penalty of perjury of the laws of the United States.

This affidavit must affirm that there have been no changes in the firm's circumstances affecting its ability to meet size, disadvantaged status, ownership, or control requirements of 49 CFR Part 26 or any material changes to the information provided in its original application, except for changes about which it has notified the MRCC. The affidavit will specifically affirm that the DBE continues to meet SBA business size criteria and the overall gross receipts cap set forth in 49 CFR Part 26. This affirmation must include supporting documentation of the DBE's size and gross receipts. In addition, the owner whose interest is relied upon for DBE certification must affirm that their personal net worth has not exceeded \$750,000.

The owner whose interest is relied upon for DBE certification is required to submit a new Personal Net Worth statement at the 3-year anniversary date of certification, also known as re-certification. If the DBE fails to provide this information in a timely manner, it will be deemed to have failed to cooperate and certification may be removed as set forth in 49 CFR Part 26.109(c).

Appeals/Hearing Processes

For Denial of Initial Certification

Pursuant to 49 CFR Part 26.85, when the agency denies a request by a firm that is not currently certified, the denying agency will provide the firm a written explanation of the

reasons for the denial, specifically referencing the evidence in the record that supports each reason. All documents and other information on which the denial is based will be made available to the applicant firm upon request. When a firm is denied certification, it is required to wait twelve (12) months before it may reapply for DBE certification with any MRCC agency partner. The time period for reapplication begins to run on the date the explanation for denial of certification is received by the applicant firm.

When the agency notifies a firm that its initial application for certification is denied, the applicant firm must appeal the decision directly to the U.S. Department of Transportation within 90 days of the date of the final decision at:

U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Civil Rights
400 Seventh Street, S.W. -- Room 5414
Washington D.C. 20590

The grounds of the appeal are limited to the issues raised in the denial letter, and any new information submitted must be specifically in support of the applicant firm's appeal.

For Removal of Eligibility

In circumstances where a certified firm, or a new applicant firm, has failed to submit required documentation or exceeded Personal Net Worth thresholds, there will be no administrative re-consideration. Those circumstances include:

- (1) Any certified firm that does not submit the annual update required in 49 CFR Part 26 would have certification removed for failure to comply after 60 days from the date the update was due. Failure to submit the update is not appealable to the MRCC.
- (2) Any firm not previously certified and denied certification due to exceeding the Personal Net Worth cap by the disadvantaged owner is not appealable to the MRCC.
- (3) If any certified firm's disadvantaged owner's Personal Net Worth exceeds the cap within the 3-year period of certification, the eligibility of the firm will be removed. Removal of certification for exceeding Personal Net Worth is not appealable to the MRCC.

Pursuant to 49 CFR Part 26.85, when a certifying partner agency makes a preliminary determination to remove the eligibility of a firm currently certified, the agency will provide the firm a written explanation of the reasons for the preliminary decision specifically referencing the evidence in the record that supports the decision. The denying agency has the burden to show, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the firm does not meet the eligibility requirements set forth in 49 CFR Part 26.

The denying agency will not base a decision to remove eligibility on a reinterpretation or changed opinion of information available to the agency at the time of its certification of the firm. The agency will base such decision only on one or more of the following:

- Changes in the firm's circumstances since the certification

- Information or evidence not available at the time of certification
- Information that was concealed or misrepresented by the firm in previous certification actions
- Change in the certification standards or requirements of USDOT since the firm was certified
- A documented finding that the agency's determination to certify the firm was factually erroneous.

The agency will provide the firm written notice of the decision and the reasons, including specific references to the evidence in the record that supports the decision. The notice will inform the firm of the consequences of the agency's decision and of the availability of an appeal to the MRCC. The firm must exhaust all administrative avenues at the local level prior to appeal to the USDOT. Therefore, if the firm chooses to appeal to the MRCC they maintain the right to appeal to the USDOT, however, if the firm chooses not to appeal to the MRCC, they cannot appeal to the USDOT.

A firm remains an eligible DBE during any appeal to the MRCC. If the MRCC makes a final decision to remove the firm's eligibility, that firm is no longer eligible as a DBE firm. The effective date of the MRCC's decision, or expiration of the time period to appeal to the MRCC, is the date the firm's eligibility is removed.

The firm must submit a written request for appeal to the decertifying agency within 15 calendar days of the preliminary decision. The letter must specify whether the firm wishes to appeal in writing or appear personally before the MRCC and if they intend to be accompanied by counsel. The decertifying agency will notify the appellant of the date of the next available MRCC meeting and the deadline for submission of supporting documentation. Any firm requesting an appeal must submit all supporting documentation to be considered by the committee no later than 45 days prior to the next regularly scheduled quarterly MRCC meeting. No appeal will be considered unless included on the agenda for the meeting and all agenda items must be finalized 30 days prior to the meeting.

The MRCC will consider written submissions by the applicant firm, including but not limited to, the certification application, the original denial letter, file memoranda prepared by the MRCC, or any individual member of the MRCC, the appeal letter and any other relevant documentation. The information or documentation submitted is limited to the issues raised in the denial letter. No new or additional documentation or information shall be considered by the committee without a showing by the appellant that it was not available or, through due diligence, could not have been made available.

While legal counsel may accompany the firm during the MRCC hearing, only the controlling owner may speak on behalf of the firm, respond to questions or otherwise make a presentation. Each owner will be limited to a period of 5 minutes to address the MRCC committee. Reasonable accommodations will be made for those with disabilities.

A written decision by the MRCC setting forth the grounds and reasoning for the decision will be mailed to the applicant firm within a reasonable time from the date the MRCC considered the appeal. The decision by MRCC is final and no further appeals will be

heard by the MRCC. The firm may appeal the decision of the MRCC to the Office of the Secretary of Transportation, U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Civil Rights, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Room 5414, Washington D.C., 20590 within 90 days after receipt of the original denial letter. The firm also has the ability to appeal directly to the USDOT rather than the MRCC if they so choose.

Third Party Challenge Ineligibility Complaints

Any person or agency may file a written complaint with the certifying agency challenging the eligibility status of a certified firm and specifying the alleged reasons why the firm is allegedly ineligible. The agency is not required to accept a general allegation that a firm is ineligible, or an anonymous complaint. The complaint must include supporting information or documentation of the assertion that the firm is ineligible. The complainant has the burden to show, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the firm does not meet the eligibility requirements set forth in 49 CFR Part 26.

The certifying agency will make every effort to maintain the confidentiality of complainants' identities, however, in some cases, it may be necessary to divulge the identity of the complainant in order to continue review of the challenge. If the complainant does not wish to waive confidentiality, it may be necessary to close the case, review or investigation with no further action.

The certifying agency will review all records concerning the firm, any material provided by the firm and the complainant, and other available information. If the agency determines, based on this review, there is reasonable cause to believe the firm is ineligible, the agency will provide written notice to the challenged firm and the complainant of the preliminary decision to find the firm ineligible. The notice must include the reasons for the determination. If the agency finds reasonable cause does not exist for removal of eligibility, the agency will notify the complainant and the challenged firm, in writing, of this determination and the basis for the decision. An agency's decision to remove eligibility does not become final until the completion of the appeal to the MRCC or expiration of the 15-day period for requesting an appeal.

Either party may appeal the decision to the MRCC using the same process as set out in the section on Appeals or Hearing Process for Removal of Eligibility.

USDOT Initiated Challenge

If a USDOT agency determines that information in the certification records or other information available provides reasonable cause to believe that a firm certified by the MRCC does not meet eligibility criteria, the USDOT may direct the MRCC to initiate a proceeding to remove the firm's certification pursuant to 49 CFR Part 26.87 (c).

Appeals to USDOT

A firm, which has been denied initial certification, must appeal directly to the USDOT. Any certified firm who has been notified by an MRCC agency partner of intent to remove eligibility may make an administrative appeal to the MRCC or may appeal directly to the USDOT pursuant to 49 CFR Part 26.89.

A complainant in an ineligibility complaint to the MRCC may appeal to USDOT if the MRCC does not find reasonable cause to propose removing the firm's eligibility. Pending the USDOT decision, the MRCC's decision remains in effect. If a firm wants to file an appeal, it must send a letter to USDOT within ninety (90) days of the date of the MRCC's

final decision, including information concerning why the MRCC's decision should be reversed.

An appellant firm challenging certification denial or removal by the MRCC must submit a letter with the name and address of any other USDOT grantee that currently certifies the firm, of any other grantees that may have rejected an application for certification from the firm or removed the firm's eligibility within one year prior to the date of the appeal, or of any other grantee with which an application for certification or action to remove eligibility is pending.

The MRCC will maintain a complete verbatim record of the hearing. If there is an appeal to USDOT, the MRCC will provide a transcript of the hearing to USDOT and, on request, to the firm at a cost of \$1.00 per page. The MRCC will retain the original record of the hearing.

Any party that appeals the MRCC's decision to USDOT will be requested by USDOT to promptly provide all information requested. The MRCC agrees to provide to USDOT the complete administrative record within twenty (20) days of its request unless US DOT extends this time period. USDOT will make its decision based solely on the entire administrative record without conducting a hearing. When the MRCC provides information to USDOT, the same information will be made available to the firm and to any third-party complainant involved, consistent with applicable law.

USDOT may affirm the MRCC's decision unless it determines, based on the entire administrative record, that the decision is not supported by substantial evidence or is inconsistent with the substantive or procedural provisions concerning certification. If USDOT determines that the MRCC's decision was unsupported, USDOT may reverse the MRCC's decision and direct the MRCC to certify the firm or to remove its eligibility. The MRCC will take the action directed by USDOT immediately upon receiving written notice. USDOT is not required to reverse the MRCC's decision if it determines a procedural error did not result in fundamental unfairness to the appellant or substantially prejudice the opportunity of the appellant to present its case.

If it appears that the record is incomplete or unclear, USDOT may remand the record to the MRCC with instructions seeking clarification or augmentation of the record before making a finding.

USDOT will not uphold the MRCC's decision based on grounds not specified in the MRCC's decision. USDOT's decision will be based on the status and circumstances of the firm on the date of the decision, which was appealed. USDOT will provide written notice of its decision to the MRCC, the firm, and the complainant in an ineligibility complaint. The notice will include the reasons for USDOT's decision. It is USDOT's policy to make a decision within one hundred eighty (180) days of receiving the complete administrative record. All decisions by USDOT are administratively final and are not subject to petitions for reconsideration.

MRCC Actions Following U.S. Department of Transportation Decision

Pursuant to 49 CFR Part 26.91, the decisions of USDOT are binding on all agencies within the MRCC.

If USDOT determines that the MRCC erroneously certified a firm, the MRCC must remove the firm's eligibility on receipt of the determination without further proceedings. If USDOT determines that the MRCC erred in a finding of no reasonable cause to remove the firm's eligibility, the USDOT will remand the case to the MRCC to determine whether the firm's eligibility should be removed.

If USDOT determines that the MRCC erroneously declined to certify or erroneously removed eligibility of the firm, the MRCC must certify the firm effective on the date of receipt of the written notice from USDOT. If USDOT affirms the MRCC's determination, no further action is necessary.

If the MRCC receives information on a firm's eligibility decision made by USDOT, related to any other USDOT agency, UCP or recipient, the MRCC will take the USDOT decision into account in any certification action involving the firm.

