



Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission Contracts Manual

Supplier Diversity Practices

A Comprehensive Guide to Supplier Diversity Practices in Procurement for the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

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Part I: The Foundational Framework for Supplier Diversity in Washington State

This section establishes the framework that governs procurement for the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks). It analyzes the progression from high-level state law to specific, mandatory agency policies, defining the legal authority, non-negotiable requirements, and strategic resources that form the basis of a compliant and effective supplier diversity program.

Section 1.1: Analysis of Governing Statutes: The Legal Authority and Obligation

The foundation of any public procurement program rests upon the legal authority granted by state law. For State Parks, three key chapters of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) define the boundaries and mandates for its procurement activities. These statutes not only grant the power to contract but also establish that fostering supplier diversity is a legally sanctioned objective of the state, moving beyond a simple low-cost imperative to a more comprehensive "best value" approach.

RCW 39.26: Procurement of Goods and Services

RCW 39.26 serves as the master statute for the procurement of goods and services by all Washington state agencies. It grants the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) the authority to establish overall state policies, standards, and procedures for procurement. This delegation of authority is central, as it empowers DES to create binding policies, such as the Supplier Diversity Policy DES-090-06, that all agencies, including State Parks, must follow.

A critical provision within this statute is RCW 39.26.160(3), which fundamentally reshapes the concept of a winning bid. It explicitly states that in determining the "lowest responsive and responsible bidder," an agency may consider "best value criteria." The statute

specifies that these criteria can include, among other factors, whether the bid "encourages diverse contractor participation". This language provides the cornerstone legal permission for State Parks to formally and defensibly incorporate supplier diversity into its evaluation and award process. It legally validates a shift away from a procurement model focused exclusively on the lowest price.

While the statute mandates that, "insofar as practicable," all purchases must be based on a competitive solicitation process, it also outlines specific and limited exceptions. These include emergencies, sole source contracts, direct buys, and purchases from statewide contracts, among others. Understanding these exceptions is crucial for applying supplier diversity strategies appropriately across different procurement types.

The evolution of the legal framework from a purely cost-centric model to a "best value" model is significant. The traditional procurement process, as reflected in State Parks' 2010 internal manuals, focuses heavily on process mechanics and identifying the lowest responsive bidder. However, the introduction of "best value criteria" in RCW 39.26.160(3) has legally broadened the definition of the "best" bid. It is no longer solely the cheapest bid. This means State Parks procurement staff must understand that considering a bidder's contribution to state diversity goals is a legally supported and integral part of their evaluation responsibility, not a deviation from it. This understanding is essential to overcoming potential cultural resistance to any decision that does not select the absolute lowest price.

RCW 39.04: Public Works

RCW 39.04 specifically governs public works projects, which it defines as "all work, construction, alteration, repair, or improvement other than ordinary maintenance," executed at the state's expense. This statute is directly applicable to a significant portion of State Parks' contracting activities. RCW 39.04 requires competitive bidding for public works projects. While it does not establish mandatory bid limits or prescribe specific competitive procedures, State Parks has determined that projects exceeding \$350,000 should undergo full competitive advertisement and should have specifications and drawings. These projects must include requirements such as the MWBE, WA Small Business, and Veteran-Owned Business Utilization Certification, as well as a Subcontractor Utilization List. Contracts are awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder.

The statute also outlines procedures for using a Small Works Roster for projects under a certain threshold, currently \$350,000, which serves as a primary procurement tool for State Parks. Within that category, Direct Contracting is permitted for projects estimated under \$150,000 that do not require formal plans and specifications.

The concepts of "responsive" and "responsible" bidders, core to State Parks' contracting workflows, are defined and reinforced within this legal framework. Notably, RCW 39.04

connects public works contracting to the state's diversity and inclusion goals. RCW 39.04.160 authorizes contracts to be subject to the requirements set by the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE), and RCW 39.04.162 addresses the awarding of contracts to veteran-owned businesses.

These provisions establish a clear statutory connection between public works projects and the state's objective to engage diverse businesses. The statute also emphasizes fair competition and the avoidance of favoritism, mandating that agencies using direct contracting from a roster rotate through available contractors.

RCW 79A.05: Parks and Recreation Commission

RCW 79A.05 establishes the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and outlines its specific powers and duties. While this chapter does not explicitly address supplier diversity in procurement, it grants the Commission broad authority to enter into contracts, manage property, and conduct operations. Exercising this authority, State Parks may directly negotiate and execute agreements. Although competition is not required, it is also not prohibited; therefore, State Parks has opted to conduct a competitive process to identify the service provider that best meets its needs, while also supporting the state's goals of including diverse and veteran-owned businesses in contracting opportunities.

Section 1.2: Deconstruction of DES Supplier Diversity Policy DES-090-06: The Non-Negotiable Mandate

If the RCW statutes provide the legal *permission* to pursue supplier diversity, DES Policy DES-090-06 provides the non-negotiable *mandate*. Acting on its authority under RCW 39.26, DES created this policy to ensure all state agencies actively work to increase contracting opportunities for small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses.

The policy's stated purpose is unambiguous: to "ensure that all procurement professionals...use approved, legally compliant strategies that encourage and facilitate the purchase of goods and services from small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses to the maximum extent possible". It further directs agencies to "take action to remove barriers that prevent" these businesses from gaining equitable access to state procurements. The policy applies to all executive and judicial branch agencies, which includes State Parks.

The policy establishes clear, auditable requirements in several key areas:

- **Leadership and Accountability:** Agency leadership must designate one or more executive leaders responsible for the agency's supplier diversity performance and publicly post their contact information. These leaders must also complete mandatory supplier diversity training. This requirement establishes clear, top-down accountability for the program's success.
- **Mandatory Training:** All agency personnel responsible for any type of procurement,

including contract managers, must complete the "WA State Supplier Diversity Training" available in the Washington State Learning Center. This training was required to be completed by April 1, 2023, or within 90 days for new staff. This ensures a baseline level of knowledge and competency across the state.

- **Core Implementation Mandates:** Section C of the policy outlines a series of required actions that form the core of an agency's supplier diversity program. These include:
 - Forecasting procurement needs.
 - Conducting outreach to diverse business communities.
 - Unbundling large contracts into smaller opportunities.
 - Utilizing a "sheltered market" approach for contracts under \$150,000.
 - Holding inclusive pre-bid conferences.
 - Using equitable language in solicitations and contracts.
 - Increases bid time to 45 days to boost small and diverse business participation
 - Employing other strategies like evaluation points and subcontractor inclusion plans.
 - Ensuring transparency by publicly posting awarded bids.
- **Enforcement Mechanism:** The policy contains a powerful enforcement mechanism. DES will consider an agency's compliance with the supplier diversity policy as part of the risk assessment that determines the agency's delegated procurement authority.

The relationship between the statutes and this policy is critical to understand. RCW 39.26.160(3) allows agencies to consider diversity in award decisions. However, DES Policy DES-090-06, grounded in this statutory authority, elevates that option into a requirement by mandating the implementation of specific, diversity-focused actions. This connection between compliance and delegated procurement authority transforms supplier diversity from a discretionary effort into a condition of operational autonomy. For State Parks project managers and contracting officers, supplier diversity is no longer an optional "extra credit" activity, it is a core requirement. Failure to comply risks the loss of delegated authority, shifting procurement responsibilities to a centralized DES process that may be less responsive to agency needs. This creates a strong incentive for full and consistent policy implementation.

Section 1.3: The Strategic Role of OMWBE and Best Practices: The "How-To" Guide

While DES sets the policy requirements, the "what" the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) provides the strategic guidance and best practices for implementation, the "how." OMWBE is the state's sole certifying agency for minority-owned business enterprises (MBEs) and women-owned business enterprises (WBEs). It

serves as the state's primary subject matter expert, partnering with DES to deliver training, develop tools, and provide direct support to agencies working to improve their supplier diversity outcomes.

OMWBE has published a clear set of best practices that provide a roadmap for agencies like State Parks. These practices are organized into a logical, five-part framework that will serve as a core organizing principle for the practical, operational sections of this guide:

1. **Proactively identify contracting and procurement needs.**
2. **Review internal procurement practices.**
3. **Identify diverse options for each category of spend.**
4. **Conduct targeted outreach.**
5. **Monitor progress and adjust strategies.**

Beyond this framework, OMWBE champions the use of critical tools and concepts. These include the **OMWBE Directory of Certified Businesses**, the definitive database for verifying M/WBE certification, and the **Washington's Electronic Business Solution (WEBS)** portal for finding small and veteran-owned businesses. OMWBE also provides detailed guidance on practical implementation steps, such as using "plain talk" in solicitations and reviewing standard contract language to remove unnecessary barriers like excessive insurance or bonding requirements.

This division of labor within the state's supplier diversity ecosystem is highly effective. DES Policy DES-090-06 issues high-level mandates, such as "conduct outreach" and "remove barriers". A procurement officer might rightly ask, "What does effective outreach look like?" or "Which specific contract clauses are considered barriers?" OMWBE's guidance documents provide the specific, actionable answers: host or attend trade shows, contact business associations, advertise on OMWBE's website, and re-evaluate insurance requirements based on actual project risk.

This means State Parks does not need to invent its supplier diversity program from scratch. The most effective and legally defensible approach is to directly adopt the best practices published and promoted by OMWBE. Doing so aligns State Parks with the state's designated experts and ensures the use of a consistent, proven, and compliant methodology.

Summary of Key Statutory and Policy Mandates

Requirement/Provision	Source	Implication for State Parks
Best Value Criteria	RCW 39.26.160(3)	Legally permits State Parks to consider a

		bidder's contribution to supplier diversity as a factor in determining the "lowest responsive and responsible bidder."
Statewide Policy Authority	RCW 39.26.090	Establishes DES's authority to create binding procurement policies, like DES-090-06, that State Parks must follow.
Small Works Roster Process	RCW 39.04.155	Defines the legal process for State Parks' primary method of contracting for public works projects under \$350,000.
Leadership Accountability	DES Policy DES-090-06 (A)	Mandates the designation of an executive sponsor for supplier diversity, ensuring top-down support and accountability.
Mandatory Training	DES Policy DES-090-06 (B)	Requires all State Parks procurement professionals, contract managers, and designated leaders to complete state-certified supplier diversity training.
Delegated Authority Risk	DES Policy DES-090-06	Ties State Parks' compliance with the supplier diversity policy directly to its ability to

		maintain its delegated purchasing authority.
Mandatory Outreach	DES Policy DES-090-06 (C2)	Requires State Parks to move beyond passive advertising to active, documented engagement with diverse business communities.
Removing Barriers	DES Policy DES-090-06 (C6)	Requires State Parks to proactively review and revise solicitation and contract language to eliminate unnecessary barriers to participation.
Sheltered Market	DES Policy DES-090-06 (C4)	Mandates that for competitive bids under \$150,000, State Parks must award to the highest-ranked responsive and responsible small or veteran-owned business.
Best Practices Guidance	OMWBE Best Practices	Provides State Parks with a proven, state-endorsed "how-to" guide for implementing the DES policy mandates effectively.

Part II: Strategic and Tactical Implementation of Supplier Diversity

This section translates the foundational legal and policy framework into a series of proactive, pre-solicitation strategies. Successful implementation of supplier diversity requires a fundamental shift from a reactive procurement process to a strategic one. The majority of the work that drives equitable outcomes occurs *before* a solicitation is

published. This part outlines the essential steps of proactive planning, multi-channel outreach, and equitable solicitation design that State Parks must embed into its core business processes.

Section 2.1: Proactive Procurement Planning and Market Analysis

Effective supplier diversity begins with early and strategic planning. The practice of waiting until a need is immediate before seeking a supplier is a significant barrier to inclusion. Proactive planning allows the agency to understand the market, identify potential diverse suppliers, and structure procurements in a way that encourages their participation.

The Forecasting Mandate

As a first step, DES Policy DES-090-06 requires all state agencies to develop and publicly post an annual forecast of their anticipated contracting and procurement opportunities. State Parks fulfill this requirement by posting a "Forecasted Needs Report" on State Parks websites by October 1st annually. This transparency serves two purposes: it provides advance notice to the business community, giving small and diverse firms more time to prepare, and it forces the agency to engage in forward-looking planning. OMWBE reinforces this principle, stating that "Early planning is the key to supplier diversity". For State Parks, this process involves reviewing past spending patterns and consolidating the known pipeline of upcoming capital projects and goods/services needs for the next fiscal year or biennium.

Market Research and Analysis

Once a forecast of needs is developed, the next critical step is market research. The goal is to determine the availability of certified small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses that can perform the anticipated work. This research must be conducted *before* a solicitation is drafted, as its findings will inform key decisions about the procurement strategy. The state provides several essential tools for this research:

- **Washington's Electronic Business Solution (WEBS):** WEBS is the state's primary vendor registration portal and the definitive source for identifying certified Small Businesses and Veteran-Owned Businesses. When searching WEBS, it is a best practice to start with broad commodity codes to cast a wider net before narrowing the search, as a small business may not have registered under every possible specific code.
- **OMWBE Directory of Certified Businesses:** This is the sole, authoritative directory for identifying state-certified Minority-Owned Business Enterprises (MBEs) and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (WBEs). While a business may self-identify as minority or woman-owned in WEBS, only firms certified by OMWBE and listed in this directory count toward an agency's M/WBE spending goals. Verification through this directory is a mandatory step.

- **WDVA Veteran-Owned Business Search:** The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) maintains the official registry of certified Veteran-Owned Businesses (VOBs). This is the required source for verifying veteran-owned status.

The process for State Parks staff should be to take an upcoming project from the forecast (e.g., "Campground Restroom Renovation"), identify the necessary trades (e.g., plumbing, electrical, general construction), and then query these three databases to create a list of potential certified bidders in the project's geographic region. This data-driven approach moves the agency from hoping diverse firms will bid to knowing who they are and how to reach them.

Section 2.2: A Multi-Channel Outreach and Communication Plan

Passive advertisement, simply posting a bid and waiting for responses, is insufficient to meet the state's supplier diversity objectives. DES Policy DES-090-06 mandates active, documented outreach, a requirement DES and OMWBE consistently reinforce through bulletins and training opportunities. State Parks must adopt a multi-channel outreach plan that is both proactive and targeted.

OMWBE's published best practices provide an excellent, actionable checklist for what this outreach should entail:

- **Direct Engagement:** Using the market research lists generated in the planning phase, State Parks staff should directly contact certified firms by email or phone to notify them of upcoming opportunities and encourage them to bid. This personal touch can significantly increase participation.
- **Community and Industry Events:** State Parks should actively participate in business community events. This includes sponsoring or attending trade shows like Alliance Northwest, regional contracting forums, and meetings of business associations that serve minority, women, and veteran entrepreneurs. This provides a venue to build relationships and communicate contracting opportunities to a broad audience.
- **Leveraging Partner Networks:** State Parks should not conduct outreach in a vacuum. The agency must advertise its contracting opportunities on OMWBE's website and share them with partner organizations such as the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, the state's Equity Commissions, and other groups that distribute information to diverse communities.
- **Promoting Certification:** A key function of outreach is to grow the pool of certified firms for the future. When State Parks staff encounter a qualified small or diverse business that is not yet certified, they should refer that business to OMWBE or WDVA for certification assistance. This is a vital, long-term strategy for building capacity in the marketplace.

Crucially, all outreach activities, every email sent, phone call made, and event attended,

must be documented. This documentation is essential for demonstrating compliance with DES policy during agency risk assessments.

Section 2.3: Designing Solicitations for Equity and Access

The structure and language of a solicitation document can either create opportunities or erect barriers. As part of its proactive strategy, State Parks must intentionally design its procurements to be as accessible as possible to small and diverse businesses. This involves two key practices: unbundling contracts and removing unnecessary barriers from solicitation language.

Unbundling Contracts

"Unbundling" is the practice of breaking a large, multifaceted contract into smaller, more focused segments. A single, multi-million dollar contract for statewide park maintenance, for example, is often too large for a small business to bid on as a prime contractor. However, if that contract is "unbundled" into separate contracts for different geographic regions or for different scopes of work (e.g., landscaping, janitorial, HVAC repair), it creates multiple prime contracting opportunities that are appropriately sized for smaller firms. The 2019 State Disparity Study noted that business owners endorsed unbundling as a key method for providing fair access to state projects. OMWBE identifies it as a primary best practice that agencies must consider. Before issuing any large solicitation, State Parks must analyze and document whether it can be unbundled to create more opportunities.

Removing Barriers in Solicitation and Contract Language

DES Policy DES-090-06 explicitly requires agencies to "remove barriers from solicitation/contract language, where appropriate". OMWBE provides specific guidance on what these barriers often are. State Parks should implement a formal review checklist for all solicitations before publication, focusing on:

- **Insurance Requirements:** Are the required insurance levels (e.g., general liability, errors and omissions) truly commensurate with the project's risk, or are they based on a one-size-fits-all template? High, unnecessary insurance premiums can be a significant cost barrier for small businesses. Requirements should be tiered based on project size and risk.
- **Bonding Requirements:** Are bid, performance, and payment bonds necessary for a small-value contract? While essential for large, high-risk projects, they can be an insurmountable hurdle for smaller firms on lower-risk jobs. State Parks should critically evaluate the necessity of bonding on a case-by-case basis.
- **Experience and Qualification Minimums:** Do the minimum requirements (e.g., "must have been in business for 10 years," "must have completed five projects of similar size") unnecessarily exclude newer but otherwise capable firms? These requirements should be tailored to the actual needs of the project, not set arbitrarily high.

- **Use of "Plain Talk":** Solicitations should be written in clear, concise, and simple language. Overly legalistic or jargon-filled documents are difficult for any bidder to navigate, but they disproportionately affect small businesses that may not have dedicated legal or proposal-writing staff.
- **Providing Adequate Time:** The timeline from solicitation release to bid due date must be sufficient to allow small businesses, which often have limited administrative capacity, enough time to prepare a thorough and responsive bid.

The implementation of these proactive strategies represents a significant evolution in the procurement timeline and workload. The traditional State Parks process often began when a project was fully defined and ready to be put out to bid. The new model required by state policy necessitates a substantial upfront investment of time and resources in forecasting, market research, outreach, and solicitation design. This "pre-procurement" phase is no longer optional; it is an essential and auditable part of the process. This shift requires new workload planning, potential adjustments to project timelines to accommodate this work, and a change in job expectations for State Parks' project and contracting staff, who must now become active participants in the agency's diversity and equity goals from the very inception of a project.

Part III: Integrating Supplier Diversity into State Parks Procurement Workflows

This section provides the critical operational guidance for embedding the principles and strategies of supplier diversity directly into the established, day-to-day procurement workflows of the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. The goal is to move from abstract policy to concrete, repeatable procedures. This will be accomplished by enhancing State Parks' existing documented processes for Small Works Roster projects, and other goods and services procurements with specific, actionable supplier diversity checkpoints.

Section 3.1: Enhancing the Small Works Roster Process – Direct Contracting (Projects < \$150,000)

The Small Works Roster Direct Contracting Public Works process is used for smaller construction projects, estimated to cost less than \$150,000, that do not require formal plans and specifications. While streamlined, this process presents numerous opportunities to intentionally include diverse businesses. The following steps integrate supplier diversity actions into the existing workflow outlined in State Parks' contracts manual and flowcharts.

- **Step 1: Project Inception and Planning (Project Representative - PR)**
 - **Supplier Diversity Action:** The PR, with support from Contracts staff, conducts preliminary market research for the specific trade needed (e.g., roofing, painting).

Using the MRSC Roster, the PR identifies a contractor from the list of certified contractors in the project's geographic area. This research must be documented and included in the project files. If six or more certified small businesses are listed for the area, one of them must be selected, rotating to ensure fairness. If five or fewer are listed, any contractor on the roster may be selected.

- **Step 2: Scope of Work Submission (Project Representative - PR)**

- **Supplier Diversity Action:** Along with the scope of work, the PR will submit the documented market research conducted using the MRSC Roster, including the selected contractor from the list of certified firms in the project's geographic area. This documentation should demonstrate compliance with supplier diversity guidelines, including rationale for contractor selection and rotation practices if applicable. The PR will also attach a project estimate that reflects anticipated costs based on the scope.

- **Step 3: Bid Package Publication and Outreach (Contracts Staff)**

- **Supplier Diversity Action:** In addition to the contractor selected by the PR from the MRSC Roster, Contracts staff will conduct targeted outreach by sending a direct email invitation to the certified firm identified during the market research phase. This outreach must be documented and serves to actively engage diverse firms by alerting them to the bidding opportunity and confirming their intent to participate. This proactive communication supports inclusive competition and reinforces the agency's commitment to equitable contracting practices.

Section 3.2: Enhancing the Small Works Roster Process (Projects < \$350,000)

The Small Works Roster process is used for public works projects estimated to cost less than \$350,000 and typically require formal plans and specifications. This process is more complex than the Small Works Roster Direct Negotiation process and offers more significant opportunities for supplier diversity, particularly through subcontracting.

- **Step 1: Pre-Bid Walkthrough (Project Representative & Contracts)**

- **Supplier Diversity Action:** Ensure that all certified firms identified during market research receive a direct invitation to the pre-bid walkthrough. The meeting should be scheduled at a time and location that maximizes accessibility for businesses that may be traveling from different areas.

- **Step 2: Addendum Process (Contracts)**

- **Supplier Diversity Action:** When distributing addenda, ensure that any questions and answers related to supplier diversity requirements (such as MWBE, WA Small Business, Veteran-Owned Business Utilization Certification) are clearly and promptly communicated to all planholders to ensure a level playing field.

Section 3.3: Application to Goods and Services Contracts

State Parks procures a wide range of goods and services, all of which are subject to RCW 39.26 and DES Policy DES-090-06. Supplier diversity principles must be applied to these contracts to ensure inclusive and equitable purchasing practices.

- **Direct Buy Purchases:** For smaller goods and services purchases that fall within State Parks' direct buy authority, the agency must make a conscious effort to select small, certified business, and procurement staff should use the state directories to identify and solicit quotes from certified businesses.
- **Competitive Solicitations for Goods and Services:** When a goods or services contract exceeds the direct buy limit and requires a formal competitive solicitation, all the requirements of DES-090-06 apply directly. State Parks must:
 - Conduct market research and outreach.
 - Review the solicitation for barriers and use plain talk.
 - Consider unbundling the requirement.
 - Utilize the strategic award mechanisms detailed in Part IV, such as the sheltered market for bids under \$150,000 or adding evaluation points for certification status.
 - Require a Subcontractor Inclusion Plan if subcontracting is anticipated.
 - Ensure transparency by publicly posting the final award documents.
- **Purchases from Statewide Contracts:** When purchasing from statewide contracts managed by DES, State Parks is not required to conduct a new competitive solicitation. However, the agency still has a responsibility to promote supplier diversity. DES provides a search tool specifically to help agencies identify small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses that hold statewide contracts. The DES Supplier Diversity Virtual Handbook clarifies that when using these contracts, agencies should prioritize purchasing from these certified firms whenever practicable. This is a simple yet effective way to increase diverse spend.

Part IV: Advanced Tools, Compliance, and Reporting

To move beyond passive compliance and actively drive supplier diversity outcomes, State Parks must utilize a set of advanced tools and mechanisms authorized by state policy. These strategies allow the agency to legally and defensibly prioritize the inclusion of small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses in contract awards. This section details these strategic award mechanisms, provides a guide to implementing Subcontractor Inclusion Plans, highlights external state-sponsored programs, and outlines the framework for mandatory compliance tracking and reporting.

Section 4.1: Strategic Award Mechanisms: Moving Beyond Low Bid

DES Policy DES-090-06 provides agencies with several powerful tools to make awards that are not based solely on the lowest price. These mechanisms are designed to be used strategically to achieve specific diversity goals.

- **Sheltered Market (Awarding Contracts with Estimated Value of \$150,000 or less):** This is one of the most direct and impactful tools available. DES Policy DES-090-06, Section C4, mandates that for any competitively procured contract with an estimated value of \$150,000 or less, the agency *must* award the contract to the highest-ranked responsive and responsible bidder that is a certified small or veteran-owned business. The only exception is if no responsive and responsible bids are received from any such firm. This effectively "shelters" these contracts from competition with larger businesses. DES itself uses this "Sheltered Market Contract" approach to increase opportunities for qualified firms. For State Parks, this means for any competitive bid under this threshold, the evaluation process should first identify all responsive and responsible small and/or veteran-owned bidders and then award to the highest-ranked among that specific group.
- **Evaluation Points for Certification:** Section C7(a) of the DES policy and the associated virtual handbook explicitly authorize agencies to award evaluation points to bidders that are certified small and/or veteran-owned businesses. In a Request for Proposals (RFP) or other best-value solicitation, State Parks can structure the evaluation criteria to include a specific, clearly defined percentage of the total available points (e.g., 5% to 10%) for a bidder's certification status. This gives certified firms a competitive advantage in the scoring process, increasing their likelihood of being the highest-ranked bidder.
- **Reserved Awards:** For multiple-award contracts, such as on-call services, Section C7(c) of the policy allows an agency to "reserve" a certain number or percentage of the total awards specifically for certified small and/or veteran-owned businesses. For example, if State Parks intends to award five on-call contracts for environmental consulting, it could reserve two of those five awards for the highest-scoring qualified small or veteran-owned firms.

Section 4.2: A Guide to Subcontractor Inclusion Plans

For larger contracts where the prime contractor is likely to use subcontractors, a Subcontractor Inclusion Plan is the primary tool for driving diversity at the second tier. DES Policy DES-090-06, Section C7(b), authorizes requiring a Subcontractor Inclusion Plan as part of a bid submission.

State Parks should adopt a standardized Subcontractor Inclusion Plan template and requirement for all relevant solicitations. Based on best practices from OMWBE, a State Parks Subcontractor Inclusion Plan should require the bidder to provide:

1. **Aspirational Goals:** The bidder must state their voluntary percentage goals for

spending with certified M/W/S/VBE subcontractors.

2. **Identification of Subcontractors:** The bidder should list the specific certified diverse firms they intend to use, the scope of work each will perform, and the estimated dollar value of each subcontract.
3. **Description of "Genuine Efforts":** The bidder must describe the outreach efforts they undertook to identify and solicit bids from diverse subcontractors. This demonstrates a good-faith effort, which is a key evaluation component.
4. **Commitment to Prompt Payment:** The plan should include a commitment to pay all subcontractors in a timely manner.

The submitted Subcontractor Inclusion Plan should be evaluated as part of the overall bid. It can be treated as a mandatory, pass/fail element (an incomplete or non-responsive Subcontractor Inclusion Plan disqualifies the bid) or be assigned points as part of the evaluation criteria. The focus of the evaluation should be on the bidder's "genuine efforts" to create opportunities, not just on meeting a rigid quota.

Section 4.3: A Framework for Monitoring, Tracking, and Reporting

A successful supplier diversity program is data-driven. OMWBE and DES have established a clear framework for monitoring, tracking, and reporting on agency performance.

- **Public Reporting:** OMWBE publicly publishes official agency supplier diversity reports by fiscal year, creating transparency and accountability. State Parks must ensure it provides accurate data for these reports.
- **Access Equity (B2Gnow) System:** This is the state's mandatory online diversity management and compliance system. For any contract that includes a Subcontractor Inclusion Plan or has subcontracting opportunities, State Parks must require its prime contractor to use the Access Equity system to report all payments made to their subcontractors. The system, accessible at www.omwbe.diversitycompliance.com, allows subcontractors to confirm payments, providing an accurate, auditable trail of Tier 2 spending. This data is essential for verifying a prime contractor's compliance with their Subcontractor Inclusion Plan commitments.
- **Internal Monitoring:** Compliance is not just an annual reporting exercise. OMWBE best practices recommend that agencies monitor their diverse spend throughout the year using the state's Enterprise Reporting tools. This allows the Supplier Diversity Leader to track progress against goals in near-real time, identify which strategies are working, and make adjustments as needed.

Supplier Diversity Mechanisms Quick-Reference Guide

Mechanism	Applicability	Legal/Policy Basis	State Parks Action
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Sheltered Market	All competitive procurements with an estimated value of \$150,000 or less.	DES-090-06 (C4)	Award contract to the highest-ranked responsive and responsible certified Small or Veteran-Owned Business bidder.
Evaluation Points	Best-value competitive solicitations (e.g., RFPs) for any dollar amount.	DES-090-06 (C7a)	Include a specific, weighted criterion in the evaluation section that awards points for a bidder's certification as a Small or Veteran-Owned Business.
Subcontractor Inclusion Plan	Solicitations where subcontracting is likely, particularly for projects over \$150,000.	DES-090-06 (C7b)	Require submission of a Subcontractor Inclusion Plan as a mandatory component of the bid. Evaluate the plan for genuine effort and feasibility.
Reserved Awards	Multiple-award contracts (e.g., on-call services).	DES-090-06 (C7c)	In the solicitation, reserve a specific number or percentage of the total awards for the highest-scoring certified Small or Veteran-Owned

			Businesses.
Access Equity (B2Gnow) Reporting	All contracts with subcontractors, especially those with a required Subcontractor Inclusion Plan.	State Mandate	Include contract language requiring the prime contractor to register in and report all subcontractor payments through the Access Equity system.

Part V: Training and Operational Planning for Supplier Diversity

The successful establishment and operation of a supplier diversity program require clear direction, comprehensive training.

Section 5.1: A Training

A policy is only as effective as the people who implement it. A structured, multi-phase training plan is essential to bring all relevant staff into compliance and ensure a consistent understanding of the new requirements.

- **Phase 1:**

- **Action:** Conduct an audit to ensure 100% of required personnel have completed the mandatory state training. This includes all procurement professionals, contracts managers, and the designated executive leader(s) for supplier diversity.
- **Source:** The training, titled "WA State Supplier Diversity Training" for staff and "WA State Contracts and Procurement for Executives Training" for leaders, is available in the Washington State Learning Center. This is a non-negotiable requirement of DES Policy DES-090-06.

- **Phase 2:**

- **Action:** The State Parks Supplier Diversity Leader should design and deliver a series of internal, State Parks-specific training sessions. These sessions will use this Guide as the core curriculum. Training should be tailored to different roles (e.g., Project Representatives, Contracts Staff, Approving Managers).

- **Phase 3:**

- **Action:** Incorporate the State Parks-specific supplier diversity training into the standard onboarding process for all new employees in project management,

contracting, and procurement roles.

- **Action:** Encourage staff to participate in ongoing training, workshops, and community of practice meetings offered by DES and OMWBE to stay current on best practices and new developments.

Section 5.2: A Supplier Diversity Leader's Operational Checklist

To effectively manage and grow the program, the Supplier Diversity Leader requires a structured operational plan. The following checklist synthesizes the recurring tasks identified throughout this report into a manageable framework.

Annual Tasks:

- **[] Develop and Publish Procurement Forecast:** By October 1st, coordinate with all State Parks departments to compile and publicly post the agency's forecast of contracting and procurement needs for the upcoming fiscal year, as required by DES-090-06.¹³
- **[] Review and Set Agency Goals:** In coordination with OMWBE, review the agency's past performance and establish the Business Diversity Spending Goal Plan for the upcoming biennium.
- **[] Analyze Annual Spend Report:** When OMWBE releases the official fiscal year-end reports, conduct a thorough analysis to identify successes, challenges, and specific areas for improvement in the coming year.
- **[] Review and Update Internal Documents:** Annually review this Guide and related State Parks manuals to ensure they remain current with any changes in state law or policy.

Quarterly Tasks:

- **[] Monitor Agency Spend:** Use the state's Enterprise Reporting system to track State Parks' diverse spend progress against goals. Share these quarterly reports with agency leadership.
- **[] Engage with State Partners:** Actively participate in the Supplier Diversity Community of Practice (SDCP) meetings hosted by DES to share best practices and learn from other agencies.
- **[] Plan Outreach Activities:** Scan the calendars of OMWBE, WDVA, and partner organizations for upcoming trade shows, conferences, and networking events. Develop a schedule for State Parks' participation.

Per-Procurement Tasks:

- **[] Consult on Pre-Solicitation Strategy:** Serve as the internal consultant for Project Representatives and contract staff during the pre-procurement phase. This includes

advising on market research, identifying unbundling opportunities, and reviewing solicitation documents for barriers before publication.

- **[] Advise on Award Mechanisms:** Based on the specific procurement, advise the procurement team on the appropriate use of strategic award mechanisms, such as the Sheltered Market, evaluation points, and reserved awards.
- **[] Ensure Compliance Tracking:** For contracts involving subcontractors, verify that the appropriate contract language is included to require the prime contractor to use the Access Equity (B2GNow) system for payment reporting.
- **[] Document and File:** Maintain a central file of all supplier diversity-related documentation for each procurement to ensure a clear audit trail for DES risk assessments.