



## **Gaston County, North Carolina**

### **Minority and Women Business Enterprise (HUB/MWBE) Outreach Strategic Plan**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Minority and Women Business Enterprise Outreach (also referenced as Historically Underutilized Business or HUB) Strategic plan is to guide Gaston County in the attainment of the County's goal of 10% or higher minority and women business participation in all construction, renovation, and repair contracts, as well as to encourage and increase minority business participation in all construction, renovation, and repair contracts to which North Carolina General Statutes (NCGS) § 143-128.2 applies. The Outreach Plan shall also be applicable to the selection process of architectural, engineering, and construction manager-at-risk services.

#### **What is the HUB/MWBE Program?**

The Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (HUB/MWBE) Program advocates actions and strategies in order to increase opportunities for historically underutilized businesses and promotes diversity and inclusion in Gaston County contracting. Gaston County has a 10% verifiable goal for participation by minority businesses in the total value of work for building projects awarded by Gaston County and costing \$300,000 or more.

#### **Goal of Outreach Strategic Plan:**

To increase minority and women-owned business participation with Gaston County, as it relates to construction, renovation, and repair contracts, to include architectural, engineering, and construction manager-at-risk, both formal and informal, projects.

#### **Objective of Outreach Strategic Plan:**

Gaston County Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Program (HUB/MWBE) strives to encourage and increase participation of minority and women-owned business enterprises in the full array of contracting opportunities available with Gaston County.

#### **Targeted Outcomes**

- Increase in HUB/MWBE (Certified) Businesses in Gaston County
- Increase in HUB/MWBE bidding on County construction and repair projects
- Increase in HUB/MWBE contractor attendance in pre-bid opportunities on County construction and repair projects



- Increase in HUB/MWBE subcontracts awarded on county construction and repair projects

## How to Participate in HUB/MWBE Program?

### Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Certification

1. In order to participate, you must first become a HUB-certified minority or women-owned business with the State of North Carolina. Certification is handled through the NC Department of Administration's Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses (NCHUB). Through Vendor Link, the online vendor registration software, businesses may register with the State and verify their status as a HUB vendor. Registration not only certifies you to do business with Gaston County as an HUB/MWBE but also makes you eligible for work with the State of NC.
2. If you would like to become certified, please visit the [NC Department of Administration's Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses](#) and complete the online application. The application process takes approximately 6-8 weeks.

### Steps to Certification

1. Complete the [SWUC Application](#)
2. Gather [required documents](#) based on your business structure
3. Complete an online HUB Certification Request by clicking <https://vendor.ncgov.com/vendor/login>. Then click "Vendor Not Registered? Register now"
4. Mail your completed package to the State HUB Office

### [Application for Statewide Uniform Certification \(SWUC\)](#)

Please contact a staff member of North Carolina HUB to receive assistance with completing certification process. The direct number is 984-236-0130 and email address is [huboffice.doa@doa.nc.gov](mailto:huboffice.doa@doa.nc.gov).

### HUB/MWBE Requirements

North Carolina General Statutes § 143-128.2 defines a "minority business" as a business:

- "In which at least 51% is owned by one or more minority persons or socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, or in the case of a corporation, in which at least 51% of the stock is owned by one or more minority persons or socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, and of which the management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more of the minority persons



or socially and economically disadvantaged individuals who own it.” The statute defines the term “minority person” as a person who is a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States and who is:

- Black (B);
- Hispanic (H);
- Asian American (A);
- American Indian (I); or
- Female (F)

According to 15 U.S.C. § 637, “[s]ocially disadvantaged individuals are those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias because of their identity as a member of a group without regard to their individual qualities.” “Economically disadvantaged individuals are those socially disadvantaged individuals whose ability to compete in the free enterprise system has been impaired due to diminished capital and credit opportunities as compared to others in the same business area who are not socially disadvantaged.”

### **Gaston County Outreach Plan and Guidelines Summary Statement**

Following the adopted Gaston County Outreach Plan and Guidelines for Recruitment and Selection of Minority Businesses for Participation in Building Construction or Repair Contracts with the Gaston County Board of Commissioners, in accordance with NCGS § 143-128.2, these guidelines establish goals for minority participation in single-prime bidding, separate-prime bidding, construction manager at risk, and alternative contracting methods, on Gaston County Board of Commissioners’ building construction or repair projects in the amount of \$300,000 or more. The outreach plan shall also be applicable to the selection process of architectural, engineering, and Construction Manager-at-Risk services. The Gaston County Board of Commissioners has a current verifiable goal of ten percent (10%) for minority participation for building construction or repair projects. The goal will be reviewed every five (5) years.

It is the intent of these guidelines that the Gaston County Board of Commissioners, as awarding authority for building construction or repair projects, and the contractors and subcontractors performing the construction contracts awarded, shall cooperate and in good faith do all things legal, proper, and reasonable to achieve the goal of ten percent (10%) for participation by minority businesses in each building construction or repair project as required by NCGS § 143-128.2. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to require contractors or awarding authorities to award contracts or subcontracts to or to make purchases of materials or equipment from minority-business contractors or minority-business subcontractors who do not submit the lowest responsible, responsive bid or bids. (*Gaston County – [Minority Business Participation](#)*)



**Gaston County will perform the following strategies and initiatives to implement the Gaston County Outreach Plan and Guidelines:**

### **Shape and Mold HUB/MWBE Organizational Culture**

- Conduct internal quarterly HUB/MWBE training, specialized departmental training, and send monthly HUB/MWBE compliance emails to all staff with procurement responsibilities to impact the organizational HUB/MWBE culture.
- Maintain pertinent HUB/MWBE Program information on the County's internal website (intranet) to provide real time support to user departments.
- Collaborate with and/or participate in departmental initiatives that can help expand HUB/MWBE program visibilities and opportunities.

### **General Strategies and Initiatives**

- Gaston County will research Minority Women and Business Enterprises/Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB) and provide resources and information to them as projects are about to be advertised and record all HUBs participation. The resources to be monitored are as follows:
  - State of North Carolina, Department of Administration, HUB website database
  - N.C. Department of Transportation HUB/DBE site and NCHUB Directory
  - Gaston County Websites
- Gaston County will, on or before any publication of a notice of bid, email or mail a copy of the notice of bid to HUB/MWBEs, which have registered with any of the above sites, for the particular category being bid.
- Gaston County will maintain a listing of all HUB/MWBEs who contact Gaston County to request that they be notified of a public bid offering. All HUB/MWBEs on such list will be furnished a copy of all advertisements for invitations for bid in the categories they have requested.
- Gaston County will advertise all planned projects on their website: [www.dobusinesswithgaston.com](http://www.dobusinesswithgaston.com) or the County's website @ [www.gastongov.com](http://www.gastongov.com). The advertisement will be at least ten (10) days in advance of the bid opening. The advertisement will include a description of the work for which the bid is being solicited, the date, the time, and location where bids may



be submitted and where bids will be opened, the name of the County employee or representative where bid documents may be reviewed or a copy obtained, and any other special requirements that may exist.

- A representative of Gaston County will attend all scheduled pre-bid conferences conducted for projects to which the General Statutes applies. At the pre-bid conference, the representative will furnish a list of HUB/MWBEs in the applicable bid category known to Gaston County and will furnish, upon request, a full copy of this Minority Business Participation Outreach Plan and Guidelines for the Recruitment and Selection of Minority Businesses for Participation in Building Construction or Repair.

### **Education and Training**

- Gaston County, its employees, and its consultants will take necessary measures to encourage the education, recruitment, and interaction between minority businesses, non-minority businesses concerning the HUB/MWBE program.
- Conduct monthly internal and external HUB/MWBE trainings, as well as participate in available local and regional training and resource building learning opportunities.
- Participate in educational opportunities throughout the community as they become available and offer training sessions to share the Gaston County Board of Commissioners' outreach plan with interested businesses and organizations.
- Conduct collaborative outreach and training events, when possible.
- Ensure that single prime contractors are aware of the County's list of HUB/MWBE firms available to submit bids to their company to assist them in meeting the County "good faith" effort goal of 10% for involvement of HUB/MWBE firms on construction and renovation/repair contracts.
- Participate in seminars that are oriented towards identifying HUB/MWBE firms interested in working with Gaston County.
- Work with architects and engineers to make HUB/MWBE subcontracting opportunities more noticeable and more easily understood by potential contractors and subcontractors.
- Partner with Western Piedmont Community College Heavy Equipment Operator Program.



- Partner with Gaston College vocational training and construction trades program to educate on HUB/MWBE program.

### **Awareness and Advertisement**

- Place emphasis on the importance of soliciting certified HUB/MWBE firms for subcontracting opportunities at pre-bid conferences and in the bid documents. Examine specifications to identify special subcontracting opportunities and strongly encourage prime contractors to solicit bids for subcontracts from MBE firms.
- Use County's website to increase the visibility of the outreach and procurement efforts to increase the number of HUB/MWBE firms working with the County.
- Continue placing advertisements in HUB/MWBE focused media for upcoming bids, inviting them to participate in the bidding process for projects.
- Be visible through participation in trade shows and business organizations of interest to HUB/MWBE firms, majority contractors, and small businesses, and provide information to the general public about the HUB/MWBE program and continue outreach efforts to the business community.
- Work with area business groups to identify HUB/MWBE firms to make them aware of the various services needed by the County and how they can become a vendor for the County.
- Create a HUB/MWBE video to promote the program and show HUB/MWBE businesses in action.

### **Relationship Building and Nurturing**

- Build new and strengthen existing minority business relationships through networking.
- Engage internal and external stakeholders to identify HUB/MWBE barriers and potential missed opportunities.
- Conduct feedback surveys primarily to identify areas that may require additional attention, in addition to HUB/MWBE vendor and potential vendor
- Develop an implementation strategy driven by stakeholder feedback to capture metrics. (This would include making determinations as to the frequency and



delivery methods that will be used to facilitate internal and external training and outreach events.)

- Continue communicating with other North Carolina public agencies to find out how their HUB/MWBE outreach programs are working and to share “best practices” and ideas to improve programs.
- Network with surrounding municipalities, counties, and school systems to compare our HUB/MWBE listing to identify companies who are not on our HUB/MWBE list.
- Work with minority-focused and small business groups that support HUB/MWBE inclusion in the solicitation of bids. These groups include the Gaston Business Association and the U.S. Small Business Administration.
- On a yearly basis, sponsor a HUB/MWBE recruiting effort at the County Administration building or related, focused on informing HUB/MWBE firms on how to become a vendor with the County.

### **Build Future HUB/MWBE Business Owners in County**

- Work with local high schools and colleges to promote HUB/MWBE and future career business opportunities (utilized to help build future business and career opportunities at the local level).
- Work locally with grassroots organizations to bring about more awareness of the HUB/MWBE program and inspire future entrepreneurs.
- Bring in successful HUB/MWBE’s as speakers to communicate about their journey and offer suggestions and recommendations to others about starting a business and participating in HUB/MWBE.

### **HUB/MWBE Advisory Committee**

- Establish an Advisory Committee to provide recommendations to the Minority Business Enterprise Outreach Coordinator (outreach) and Public Works Department (procurement) to support the goals and objectives of the HUB/MWBE program such as development strategies, policies, and operational procedures.



- Establish a HUB/MWBE Award to be given annually to HUB/MWBE's that have been deemed "successful" and "supportive" of the County's HUB/MWBE program.

## Implementation Strategies

- Use the County's intranet and email to promote HUB/MWBE Program initiatives internally and create a HUB/MWBE Program Facebook page and website to promote externally. Also utilize relationships with HUB/MWBE support organizations such as the NC HUB/MWBE Coordinators Network and Minority Contractors Association to help distribute information externally. To use virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, in-person events and develop and design targeted program PowerPoint presentations for internal and external interfacing.
- Provide certification assistance to eligible vendors and cultivate an internal procurement culture that prioritizes HUB/MWBE utilization, when possible. The primary focus is to conduct training and outreach events that will support and drive practices that increase HUB/MWBE contractor participation.
- Review County HUB/MWBE quarterly data to determine progress. The data would include, for example, HUB/MWBE utilization reports, event attendance records, survey data, etc.
- Leverage successes to create new opportunities. Highlight past experiences, upcoming opportunities, and other pertinent information to drive future planning, catering to the changing needs of HUB vendors.
- Provide detailed information to majority contractors concerning the bidding and HUB/MWBE good faith efforts requirements by holding meetings with the contractors.
- Assess the effectiveness of the HUB/MWBE program and identify opportunities to enhance it by evaluating HUB/MWBE participation and compliance and reviewing the good faith efforts provided in bid packages.
- Identify subcontracting opportunities unique to each construction contract and project and concentrate heavily on targeting certified HUB/MWBE firms that have expressed an interest in the Gaston County Board of Commissioners' projects. Identify these opportunities and contact interested businesses no later than ten





(10) days prior to the bid opening and provide a list of prime contractors who plan to participate in the project.

- Enhance the Gaston County Board of Commissioners webpage by including the Outreach Plan and Guidelines, Outreach Strategic Plan, good faith efforts list, links to HUB/MWBE resources, and creating awareness of specific subcontracting opportunities.
- Maintain or continue to maintain a database specifically for HUB/MWBE firms and majority contractors to ensure those firms wishing to do business with the Gaston County Board of Commissioners have access to up-to-date information.

Any questions concerning the content of this HUB/MWBE Outreach Strategic Plan should be directed to the Office of Community Affairs (County Manager's Office) at (704)-866-3473.