



Women's Procurement Circle 2024 Policy Priorities

The Women's Procurement Circle (WPC) mission is to advocate for policies that strengthen women-owned companies that do business with the federal government.

Increase Awards to Women-Owned Businesses: The federal government has a goal of awarding 5% of all contract dollars to women-owned small businesses (WOSB). Although the women's procurement program was implemented in 2011, the government has only met this goal twice – many federal agencies simply do not utilize the program. According to a recent CRS report, in FY2020, 34% of the federal contracts awarded to WOSBs were awarded in full and open competition, about 61% were awarded with another small business preference (8(a) and the HUBZone program) and only 5% were awarded through the women's procurement program. As outlined in the President's Executive Order on advancing equity and a subsequent memo from OMB, increasing the goals for women-owned contractors is part of the Administration's priorities. Increasing federal contracts to WOSBs results in creating a more dynamic and resilient industrial base, of which these firms are an important part. Therefore, the WOSB goal should be raised from 5% to 10%, with the overall small business goal increased accordingly. Congress, the SBA and federal agencies and women-owned businesses must work together to increase contracts awarded to women through this program.

Create An Economically Disadvantaged Women-Owned (EDWOSB) Small Business Goal: Despite the difference in requirements to participate in the WOSB and EDWOSB programs, there is not a dedicated contracting goal on SBA's procurement scorecard for EDWOSBs. To be eligible for participation in the EDWOSB program, participants must meet income and net worth requirements. Given the current emphasis on encouraging new entrants into the federal market and increasing awards to disadvantaged businesses, we believe that a separate contracting goal for EDWOSBs would incentivize federal agencies to maximize the utilization of these firms. Further, the SBA should consider devising a program to give economically disadvantaged women-owned firms the same kind of business development assistance and tools available to individually-owned 8(a) companies. The hallmark of the 8(a) program is its success in assisting economically disadvantaged businesses to grow through the tools and assistance given through the program. EDWOSB companies would benefit from similar resources.

Expand Sole Source Contract Opportunities for Women-Owned Businesses: As government buying continues to move away from direct contracts to small companies and into large contracts, the authority contained in the WOSB program to award sole source contracts is imperative. Congress should increase the sole source threshold, which is currently \$4.5/\$7 million for the duration of the contract—an amount far too low to be used effectively. Additionally, creating parity among SBA socioeconomic contracting programs would incentivize agencies to increase their awards to women. Sole source authority is an important tool contracting officers can use to award work to WOSBs.

Maximize Women-Owned Business Awards on Governmentwide Contracts: Due to the growing popularity of category management, the government has begun to favor large, long-term contracts, in lieu of smaller, direct contracts. For example, Best in Class (BIC) contract spending totaled a record \$51 billion in FY2020, up 74% since FY2016. These long term governmentwide contracts require substantial resources to bid and win task orders, creating a barrier to entry for many innovative small businesses to enter or remain competitive in the federal marketplace. We applaud the General Services Administration (GSA) for adding a WOSB track to the pending Polaris contract, an action women have been advocating for since the enactment of the WOSB program in 2011.



Eliminate Self-Certification in the Women-Owned Small Business Program: The government has rarely met its goal for contract awards to women-owned firms, so self-certification is clearly not working. Eliminating self-certification for the WOSB program at the Small Business Administration (SBA) and requiring self-certified women-owned companies to apply for certification through the SBA will increase the integrity of the program and assure federal buyers that these companies are ready to do business.