

City of Austin Disparity Study Frequently Asked Questions



The City of Austin is conducting a Disparity Study of its Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (“DBE”) and Minority- Women-owned Business Enterprise (“M/WBE”) programs to ensure that M/W/DBEs have equal access to contracting opportunities and that the City’s current programs remain legally defensible and administratively successful.

What is a “Disparity Study”?

A disparity study involves compilation of evidence to determine whether the City has a strong basis for implementing race- and gender-conscious contracting remedies for its locally-funded contracts, and narrowly tailoring its M/W/DBE programs. This includes statistical evidence of disparities, if any, between the availability of M/WBEs and their utilization on locally-funded contracts and related subcontracts and throughout the Austin economy as a whole.

The study will further examine factors necessary for entrepreneurial success, such as access to business capital, bonding, networks, suppliers and other resources. The study also will gather anecdotal evidence of any continuing effects of past or present race and sex discrimination, and the impact of the current M/W/DBE programs. Finally, the study will review the City’s current programs and activities and make recommendations for future initiatives and enhancements, including data collection to assist the City in setting its project-specific and overall goals

Who is conducting the study?

Colette Holt & Associates (CHA), a nationally recognized expert team on disparity studies and M/WBE programs, in conjunction with local partners Cultural Strategies, Inc., Pink Consulting and Adisa Public Relations, Inc.

How can business owners and other interested parties be involved?

The participation of business owners and other interested parties such as trade associations, advocacy groups, community organizations, etc. is critical to the study’s outcomes in two important ways. The study team will contact businesses to confirm information on specific contracts and/or to receive additional contract information that is

currently not available to the City. CHA will also conduct interviews with business owners and stakeholders to collect information regarding discriminatory barriers and the City’s programs. An electronic survey will also be sent to interested parties to collect additional anecdotal information.

How will the public meeting, stakeholder listening sessions and business owner interviews be conducted and how do I participate?

CHA will host a public information meeting to introduce the study methodology and process. A bit later in the process, CHA will host stakeholder/ small group business owner interviews. Lastly, CHA will administer an online survey for business owners.

Participants who are unable to attend the meetings or the interviews but who would like to provide input to the disparity study are encouraged to return the survey and to submit written statements at the study email: austin-study@mwbelow.com.

When will the study be completed?

The study is anticipated to be completed Winter 2021.

Where can I find additional information?

For additional information, visit the study website at austin.disparity-study.com.

Who do I contact with questions?

You may contact the Study team via austin-study@mwbelow.com or 855-692-3529.

Or you may contact:

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