



Small Business Certifications Checklist

This checklist outlines the major small business certifications recognized by federal, state, and national certifying agencies. It explains what each certification is, who qualifies, and what documentation or requirements are needed for application. Use this as a guide to identify certifications that align with your business structure and goals.

1. SBA Federal Certifications

These certifications are administered or recognized by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and provide access to federal contracting opportunities.

a. 8(a) Business Development Program

****Purpose:**** Provides assistance to socially and economically disadvantaged businesses for federal contracting participation.

****Eligibility:****

- Small business as defined by SBA size standards.
- At least 51% owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged U.S. citizens.
- Owner's adjusted net worth below \$850,000 and personal income under \$400,000.
- Demonstrated good character and potential for success.

****Documents Required:**** Business tax returns (3 years), personal financial statements, resumes, operating agreement, and business plan.

b. Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) / Economically Disadvantaged WOSB (EDWOSB)

****Purpose:**** Opens contracting opportunities for women-owned businesses in underrepresented industries.

****Eligibility:****

- At least 51% owned and controlled by one or more women.
- Women manage day-to-day operations and make long-term decisions.
- For EDWOSB: personal net worth < \$850,000 and adjusted gross income < \$400,000.



****Documents Required:**** Birth certificate/passport, proof of citizenship, business formation documents, tax returns, and bank signature cards.

c. Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) / Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB)

****Purpose:**** Offers federal contracting preference for veteran-owned businesses, particularly those with service-connected disabilities.

****Eligibility:****

- At least 51% owned and controlled by one or more veterans (or service-disabled veterans).
- For SDVOSB: at least one owner has a service-connected disability verified by the VA.
- Veteran(s) manage daily business operations and decision-making.

****Documents Required:**** DD-214, VA Disability Letter (if applicable), corporate documents, tax records.

d. HUBZone Certification

****Purpose:**** Encourages economic development in historically underutilized business zones through set-aside contracts.

****Eligibility:****

- Principal office located in a designated HUBZone.
- At least 35% of employees reside in HUBZone areas.
- Small business as defined by SBA size standards.
- Owned and controlled at least 51% by U.S. citizens or designated entities.

****Documents Required:**** Employee addresses, lease agreement, payroll records, and business license.

2. National Certifying Organizations

These certifications enhance access to corporate supply chains and government contracting opportunities.

a. Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)

****Purpose:**** Recognizes women-owned businesses for corporate and government supplier diversity programs.



****Eligibility:****

- At least 51% owned, controlled, and operated by one or more women who are U.S. citizens.
- Proof of effective management and independence of the business.

****Documents Required:**** Business license, tax returns, proof of ownership, resumes, and corporate governance documents.

b. National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC)

****Purpose:**** Certifies minority-owned businesses for corporate supplier diversity inclusion.

****Eligibility:****

- At least 51% minority ownership (Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or Pacific Islander).
- Owners must be U.S. citizens and actively manage daily operations.

****Documents Required:**** Proof of ethnicity, business registration, ownership documents, and tax returns.

3. Additional Federal and State Certifications

Many states and agencies have parallel certifications that expand opportunities beyond federal contracts.

a. Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)

****Purpose:**** Required for businesses seeking to participate in U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)-funded projects.

****Eligibility:****

- At least 51% owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.
- Owner's personal net worth < \$1.32 million.
- Firm meets SBA small business size standards.

****Documents Required:**** Personal net worth statement, business financials, and certification affidavit.



Next Steps

1. Review eligibility and identify which certifications align with your ownership structure.
2. Gather required documentation before applying.
3. Visit official agency websites (SBA.gov, WBENC.org, NMSDC.org, transportation.gov/osdbu) to confirm current requirements.
4. Maintain records and renew certifications as required.

Certification Directory – At a Glance

Quick reference table of small business certifications, websites, and associated fees.

Certification	Website	Fee
8(a) Business Development Program	Click here	No cost
WOSB / EDWOSB	Click here	No cost (SBA) / \$350–\$500 (Third Party)
SDVOSB / VOSB	Click here	No cost
HUBZone	Click here	No cost
WBENC	Click here	\$350–\$1,250
NMSDC	Click here	\$350–\$1,200
DBE	Click here	No cost