

APPENDIX J.

Inventory of Neutral Programs

This appendix describes small business assistance and other race-neutral programs that are (a) currently employed by ODOT or (b) otherwise available in Oklahoma.

A. Small Business Assistance and Other Race-neutral Programs Currently Employed by ODOT

The study team reviewed the race- and gender-neutral efforts that ODOT has in place or is currently initiating. ODOT has implemented a number of race- and gender-neutral remedies to improve the success of small firms seeking ODOT work, including the following programs.

Networking breakfasts. ODOT hosts two networking breakfasts each year where prime contractors and DBE contractors have the opportunity to meet each other face-to-face. Each networking breakfast hosts a small group that includes six to eight majority-owned prime contractors and 10 to 15 DBEs. The event gives the DBE community an opportunity to introduce their businesses to the prime contractors in an intimate setting. The breakfast is coordinated by ODOT's supportive services coordinator and is held at a local hotel conference room.

DBEs are selected based on the industry of the primes that are expected to be present at the breakfast. Firms must be invited to attend.

Newsletters. ODOT prepares and distributes a quarterly DBE newsletter. The newsletter is sent to all DBEs and to resource centers such as the Oklahoma Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and the Oklahoma Bid Assistance Networks, the Association of General Contractors, and ODOT field offices. The newsletter has grown over time to a length of eight pages and includes articles related to DBE business development and management as well as information about bonding, accounting and doing business with primes. The newsletter is mailed and an electronic version is posted online. Contract opportunities are not listed in this newsletter.

Technical assistance. ODOT sponsors a variety of technical assistance for DBEs:

- ODOT partners with the SBDCs and Votec Career Centers to provide training on issues such as bidding, estimating, bonding, accounting and financing.
- ODOT periodically offers in-house classes in small groups or one-on-one about how to navigate the ODOT website or how to do business with ODOT.
- In addition, 15 DBEs are eligible for up to \$1,000 per year from ODOT to pay for assistance from an outside consultant.

ODOT promotes technical assistance opportunities in the DBE newsletter and at various ODOT breakfasts and conferences. Firms are also made aware of these services at the time of their certification.

ODOT reported that some DBEs take advantage of the specific training and that no DBE firms have used the \$1,000 technical assistance funding.

ODOT-sponsored DBE conference. ODOT hosts an annual DBE conference where speakers are invited to discuss issues relevant to DBEs, including bonding, accounting, and doing business with ODOT and prime contractors. Topics are selected based on a survey of DBE interests and inquiries. The conference includes a networking lunch where prime contractors and DBEs have the opportunity to interact with one another.

ODOT invites up to 100 entities, including DBE-certified firms and other minority- and women-owned firms. ODOT reported that approximately 50 minority businesses attend at least part of the conference each year.

Prompt payment. Prime contractors performing work for ODOT are required to pay all subcontractors for satisfactory performance of their contracts no later than thirty days after receipt of each progressive payment from ODOT. The prime contractor must also make a prompt return of retainage to the subcontractor within thirty days after the subcontractor's work is satisfactorily completed, whether or not the prime contractor's work is complete. Work is considered "satisfactorily completed" when:

- ODOT finds the work completed in accordance with the plans and specifications;
- Any required paperwork has been received and approved; and
- ODOT has determined the final quantities on the subcontractor's portion of the work.

Failure to comply with the prompt payment and return-of-retainage requirements may result in sanctions under the contract. Prompt payment complaints are kept and investigated by regulatory services and are maintained in an ODOT database.

Focus team. ODOT is currently working to coordinate a focus team for construction and professional services. The focus team will comprise DBE and non-DBE firms as well as ODOT staff to serve as an advisory board for the DBE program, identifying issues and barriers to the success of minority businesses. The advisory board will help develop recommendations to encourage the utilization of minority- and women-owned firms at ODOT.

B. Small Business Assistance and Other Race-neutral Programs Available in the Oklahoma Marketplace

In addition to the race- and gender-neutral measures ODOT currently has in place, there are a number of neutral programs that other public, private and non-profit organizations administer in Oklahoma. Figure J-1 below provides examples of those programs. Figure J-2 highlights small business assistance and other neutral programs offered by specific organizations in the Oklahoma marketplace.

Figure J-1. Examples of small business assistance and other neutral programs in Oklahoma

Neutral remedies	Examples in the local marketplace
Technical assistance	Technical assistance programs are readily available throughout Oklahoma. Programs primarily provide general information and assistance for business start-ups and growing businesses. Examples range from Small Business Development Centers that serve all groups to more targeted programs for minorities and women through minority chambers of commerce, focusing on business planning, marketing, training workshops and financial management. Other technical assistance providers focus on business advice and mentoring, like those services offered by the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) and the City of Tulsa Bridge Program. Technical assistance programs available in Oklahoma are not industry-specific.
Opportunity identification and bid assistance	Several programs provide assistance with identifying work opportunities and providing bid assistance in Oklahoma. For example, 17 of the 56 Oklahoma Career Tech Centers provide access to the Oklahoma Bid Assistance Network (OBAN), offering marketing and technical assistance to Oklahoma businesses interested in selling products and services to federal, state and local governments. Other programs, including the Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma Minority Supplier Development Council (OMSDC), provide procurement assistance and exposure to business opportunities.
Small business finance and capital assistance	<p>Small business financing is available through several local agencies within Oklahoma. For example, low-interest loans for the start-up and expansion of small businesses are provided by the Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City. Other agencies like Rural Enterprises, Inc (REI), Oklahoma City Northeast, Inc. and the Minority Enterprise Small Business Investment Company (MESBIC) offer a variety of business lending programs with the help of federal and private funds.</p> <p>Examples of federally-funded and -managed finance programs include the USDOT Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Short Term Lending Program for certified DBE firms and the Small Business Administration (SBA) guaranteed loans programs.</p>
Bonding assistance	<p>There are two programs that offer bonding assistance. The SBA Bond Guarantee Program provides bid, performance and payment bond guarantees for individual contracts. The USDOT Bonding Assistance Program also provides bonding assistance in the form of bonding fee cost reimbursements for DBEs performing transportation work.</p> <p>A number of different agencies provide training on how to obtain a bond, including the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.</p>
Networking and outreach	A number of agencies serve as advocates for small businesses working to sponsor focus sessions, seminars and networking events to highlight small businesses and encourage their use for government and private sector projects. Some local organizations facilitating this outreach and networking include the City of Tulsa Bridge Program, the Consortium for Minority Business Development and the minority chambers of commerce.
Business incubator	Several organizations throughout Oklahoma administer business incubator programs, offering entrepreneurial firms hands-on management assistance, shared office services, equipment and technology. Examples of local organizations that operate business incubators include The Greater Oklahoma City and Tulsa Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, The Greenwood Chamber of Commerce, and Rural Enterprises, Inc.

Source: BBC Research & Consulting.

Figure J-2.**Small business assistance and other neutral programs offered by Oklahoma organizations**

Organization name	Advocacy/ outreach	Bidding assistance	Bonding assistance	Budgeting & financial management	Business Education	Business planning assistance	Business plan development assistance	Counseling	Contracting procurement assistance	Financial/ capital assistance	Management assistance	Marketing strategies & assistance	Mentor/protégé program	Personnel assistance	Quality control assistance	Business incubators
Capitol Chamber of Commerce	■															
City of Tulsa Bridge Program	■	■							■				■			
Community Action Agency				■	■	■	■	■		■						
Greater Tulsa Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	■	■				■	■	■			■	■		■	■	■
Greenwood Chamber of Commerce	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■				■
Native American Business Enterprise Center	■	■							■			■			■	
Northside Chamber of Commerce	■	■		■		■	■	■	■		■	■				
OK Technology Centers-Business Assistance Network (OBAN)		■			■		■	■	■		■	■				
Oklahoma Business Incubator Association (OBIA)	■															
Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce	■															
Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	■			■	■			■			■	■			■	■
Oklahoma Consortium for Minority Business Development	■															
Oklahoma Department of Commerce								■								
Oklahoma Minority Supplier Development Council	■								■							
Oklahoma State Chamber of Commerce	■															
Rural Enterprises, Inc. (REI)	■									■						■
Service Corp of Retired Executives (SCORE)	■							■								
Small Business Administration	■		■					■	■	■						
Small Business Development Centers				■	■		■	■	■			■				
South Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce	■															
Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City	■			■	■	■	■	■			■	■				
Women's Business Center	■					■		■			■	■				

Source: BBC Research & Consulting.