

City of Austin



MBE/WBE/DBE Disparity Study

FAQ

HOW CAN BUSINESS OWNERS GET INVOLVED?

The participation of business owners is crucial to the Disparity Study's success. Interested business owners can be part of the process in two ways:

Business Owner Interviews & Stakeholder Meetings

NERA will be conducting personal interviews with business owners to gather information on your experiences and insights. Invitations will be sent to all identifiable City vendors, contractors and subcontractors as well as to a cross-section of area business owners at large. Since space will be limited, it is important that you RSVP to confirm your attendance when you receive your invitation.

Mail Surveys

If you receive a mail survey, please complete it online or return it by mail. This short 14-question survey will be mailed out to a statistically representative cross-section of area businesses. Since the survey period will only be open for responses for a limited time, please complete and return the survey as soon as you receive it.

The interviews, stakeholder meetings and survey components of the Disparity Study are currently expected to take place in July and August 2014. NERA hosted a community "kickoff" meeting on April 3rd 2014 that provided an overview of the Study and information about opportunities for participation. Please visit <http://austintexas.gov/departments/small-and-minority-business> for the most current information about the Disparity Study.

The City of Austin is currently conducting a Disparity Study for its Minority- & Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MBE/WBE) and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) programs for contracting and procurement. To determine whether these programs remain legally defensible and administratively successful, the City has undertaken this Study to gather and analyze the type of evidence required by the federal courts. Additionally, the City's Disparity Study is examining Veteran-Owned Business Enterprises for the first time.

The Austin Independent School District and Travis County are conducting disparity studies concurrently with the City of Austin Disparity Study.

What is a "Disparity Study"?

A Disparity Study gathers evidence to determine whether the City has a strong basis for implementing race- and gender-conscious contracting remedies. This includes statistical evidence of disparities between MBE/WBE/DBE availability and utilization on City contracts and subcontracts, and within the Austin-area economy as a whole, as well as evidence regarding the factors necessary for business success, such as access to business capital, formal and informal business networks and suppliers. The Study will also gather qualitative information directly from business owners regarding their experiences with discrimination as well as their everyday challenges and successes doing business in the Austin market area. Additionally, the Study will evaluate the City's current MBE/WBE/DBE programs and related policies and make recommendations for future initiatives and enhancements.

Who is conducting the Disparity Study?

NERA Economic Consulting was awarded the contract for this Study after a competitive Request for Qualifications process. The NERA team is led by Senior Vice President Dr. Jon Wainwright, one of the nation's foremost experts on disparity studies. The NERA team is proud to include three MBE/WBE firms—Business Resource Consultants, CR Dynamics & Associates, Inc. and D'Moriea Consulting, and two non-MBE/WBE firms—Bryan Cave LLP and J&D Data Services.

What if I don't receive a survey or can't attend a business interview session?

We welcome your comments by email at DisparityStudy@NERA.com. Comments will be accepted throughout the course of the Study.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

From NERA Economic Consulting: Dr. Jon Wainwright, Project Director, 512-383-4802, jon.wainwright@nera.com. From City of Austin: Debra Dibble, Assistant Director, Small & Minority Business Resources Department, 512-974-1656, debra.dibble@austintexas.gov.

¹www.austinisid.org/contractandprocurement and www.co.travis.tx.us/purchasing/hub.asp.