

Cook County Disparity Study

Frequently Asked Questions



Cook County is conducting a Disparity Study of its Minority- Women-owned Business Enterprise (“M/WBE”) programs to ensure that M/WBEs have equal access to contracting opportunities and that the County’s current program remains legally defensible and administratively successful.

What is a “Disparity Study”?

A disparity study involves compilation of evidence to determine whether the County continues to have a strong basis for implementing race- and gender-conscious contracting remedies for its County-funded contracts, and narrowly tailoring its M/WBE program. This includes statistical evidence of disparities, if any, between the availability of M/WBEs and their utilization on County contracts and related subcontracts and throughout the Cook County 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/WBE program. Finally, the study will review the County’s current program and activities and make recommendations for future initiatives and enhancements, including data collection to assist the County 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 partner Sandi Llano & Associates.

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 County. CHA will also conduct interviews with business owners and stakeholders to collect information regarding

discriminatory barriers and the County’s program. An electronic survey will also be sent to interested parties to collect additional anecdotal information.

How will the public webinar and business owner interviews be conducted and how do I participate?

CHA will host a public information webinar to introduce the study methodology and process. A bit later in the process, CHA will administer an online survey for business owners and host business owner small group interview sessions.

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: cookcounty-study@mwbellow.com.

When will the study be completed?

The study is anticipated to be completed late Fall 2021.

Where can I find additional information?

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

Who do I contact with questions?

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

Or you may contact:

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