DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Office of the Secretary

49 CFR Part 26

[Docket No. OST–2012–0147]

RIN 2105–AE08

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise: Program Implementation Modifications

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary (OST), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT or Department) is amending its disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) program regulations to improve program implementation in three major areas or categories. First, the rule revises the uniform certification application and reporting forms, creates a uniform personal net worth form, and collects data required by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP–21), on the percentage of DBEs in each State. Second, the rule strengthens the certification-related program provisions, which includes adding a new provision authorizing summary suspensions under specified circumstances. Third, the rule modifies several other program provisions concerning such subjects as: Overall goal setting, good faith efforts, transit vehicle manufacturers, and counting for trucking companies. The revision also makes minor corrections to the rule.

DATES: This rule is effective November 3, 2014.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For questions related to this final rule or general information about the DBE rules/regulations, please contact Jo Anne Robinson, Senior Attorney, Office of General Law, Office of the General Counsel, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590, Room W94–205, 202–366–6984, JoAnne.Robinson@dot.gov. DBE program points of contact for information related to other aspects of the DBE program, including certification appeals, programs to assist small and disadvantaged businesses, and information on the DBE program in specific operating administrations, can be found at https://www.civilrights.dot.gov/disadvantaged-business-enterprise/about-dbe-program/dbe-program-points-contact.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On September 6, 2012, the Department published in the Federal Register (77 FR 54952) a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to improve implementation of the DBE program. The DBE program is designed to enable small businesses owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals to compete for federally-funded contracts let by State and local transportation agencies the receive funds from DOT (i.e., recipients). The proposed rule called for a 60-day comment period, with comments to be received by November 5, 2012. Subsequently, the comment period was extended to December 24, 2012, through a notice published October 25, 2012 (77 FR 65164). The Department received approximately 300 comments from State departments of transportation, transit authorities, airports, DBEs, non-DBE firms, and representatives of various stakeholder organizations. Several commenters suggested that the Department hold a public meeting or listening session on the proposed changes before issuing a final rule. The Department responded by scheduling a public listening session for October 9, 2013, as announced in a September 18, 2013 notice (78 FR 57336), to receive additional public input on the costs and benefits of certain proposed changes, among other things. The public comment period also was reopened and extended from the date of publication until October 30, 2013. However, due to the lapse in government funding on October 1, 2013, the October 9, 2013 listening session was canceled and rescheduled to December 5, 2013 (78 FR 68016; November 13, 2013). The public comment period was reopened and extended to December 26, 2013. The Department received an additional 50 written comments during the reopened comment period and received in-person oral testimony from 23 individuals at the listening session, which was held in Washington, DC. Over 500 individuals registered to participate in the listening session via Web conferencing made available by the Department. A transcript of the comments received at the listening session and through the Web conferencing was placed in the NPRM docket before it closed on December 26, 2013.

Many of the written comments the Department received were extensive and covered numerous proposed changes, as well as commentary on existing regulations that are not the subject of a proposed amendment. Commenters also suggested changes beyond the scope of what was proposed by the Department in the NPRM. The Department has made changes in this final rule to some of its proposals in response to comments received during the entire comment period and at the listening session. With the exception of comments that are beyond the scope of the proposed rulemaking, or that failed to set forth any rationale or make suggestions, the Department discusses and responds to the comments on the major issues in the NPRM below.

Personal Net Worth (PNW) Form and Related Requirements

PNW Form

The Department explained in the NPRM the reasons it believed creating a uniform personal net worth (PNW) form would clear the confusion that may exist when recipients or other entities that perform the certification function (i.e., certifying agencies) use the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) Personal Financial Statement Form 413 as part of their evaluation of the economic disadvantage of an applicant for certification pursuant to the rule. For example, the SBA Form 413 requires each partner or stockholder with 20% ownership or more of voting stock to complete the form. This is not required by 49 CFR part 26 and has caused some confusion. We proposed a revision to 49 CFR 26.67 and offered a sample PNW form and accompanying instruction sheet (see the proposed Appendix G of the September 6, 2012, proposed rule). The Department proposed that a standard form be used by all applicants to the program. Recipients were encouraged to post the new form electronically in a screen-fillable format on their Web site to allow users to complete and print the form online.

The proposed PNW form differed in several respects from the SBA’s form that the Department mentioned in its June 2003 revision to Part 26 as an appropriate form for use by our recipients in determining whether an applicant meets the economic disadvantage requirements. Most notably, the form’s length increased when more columns and rows were added to give applicants space to fill in their answers. We also proposed that persons completing the form submit backup documentation such as current bank, brokerage, and retirement account statements, mortgage notes, and instruments of conveyance and encouraged recipients when reasonable questions or concerns arise to look behind the statement and the submissions. A related proposal involved requiring applicants to submit documentation for items excluded from the PNW calculation, such as net equity in the primary residence and the value
Commenters that addressed the question of requiring the spouse of an applicant who is not involved in operating the business to submit a PNW form included business owners, UCP recipients, and advocacy group representatives. Ten commenters favored such a requirement, citing the need to review the applicant’s claim that his or her PNW statement accurately reflects community property interests and as a check on the transfer of assets as a means to circumvent the eligibility requirements. Twenty commenters opposed requiring a spousal PNW statement, citing paperwork burden concerns and pointing out that the existing regulation enables certifiers to obtain this information on a “case-by-case” basis. Many commenters believed the requirement would be intrusive and unwarranted and would complicate an already burdensome application. A commenter stated that a blanket requirement would be counterproductive and dissuade eligible DBE owners from participating in the program. However, the majority of commenters favored the collection of a PNW statement from a spouse if he or she has some role in the business (e.g., stockholder, corporate director, partner, officer, of key person), has funded or provided financial guarantees, or has transferred or sold the business to the applicant.

All of the commenters that responded to the Department’s question of extending the treatment of assets held by married couples should extend to couples who are part of domestic partnerships or civil unions where these relationships are formally recognized under State law.

Over 60 comments addressed issues related to the PNW form, a significant majority of which supported the idea of a DOT-developed PNW form, although some did advocate for the continued use of SBA Form 413. One commenter suggested that the Department mandate that the new form be used without modification and that regulatory provisions be added to address violations by Unified Certification Program (UCP) certifying agencies that revise the form. There were many comments regarding the propriety of including in the PNW form assets that are excluded from the calculation used to determine economic disadvantage under the terms of the existing regulations at 49 CFR. While the majority of the commenters supported creating a DOT form, many thought the proposed form was too burdensome, requested too much documentation, is complicated, and should not be used for those reasons. Similarly, other commenters objected to the form’s length, with some likening it to a Federal income tax filing. Some commenters requested information on the methodology used to estimate the paperwork burden associated with completing the proposed DOT PNW form.
program-specific needs, e.g., not to include the 49 CFR 26.67(e)(2)(iii) exclusions for ownership interest in the firm and equity in the primary residence on the front page.

The Department notes that the estimated burden hours contained in the proposed rule were based on the Department’s experience in working with DBE and UCP agencies and our intent to produce a DBE-specific PNW form that includes the information typically needed to perform the certification function, but is not overly burdensome. Further, our proposed rule’s estimate of 8 hours to complete the proposed PNW form is greater than the 1.5 hours SBA estimates for its form, which was designed to take into account the different purposes between the two programs and the fact that DBE applicants often need to supplement their form with supporting documentation. As discussed above, in response to comments, we have decided to lessen the requirements of the final form in today’s final rule and believe that our original estimate, based on the form that will be now finalized, is reduced to 2 hours, slightly more than the SBA estimate for its form.

Another change we proposed and that we finalize today is that the instructions at the top of the form are customized for the DBE and ACDBE programs. Like SBA, we are requiring each owner to list on page 1 all assets (whether solely or jointly held) and specify liabilities. The categories of assets and liabilities we require mirror closely the SBA’s categories but have minor differences. The Department’s PNW form omits “sources of income and contingent liabilities,” which is contained on SBA’s form. On page 2, section 4 of the DOT PNW form, owners must report any equity line of credit balances on real estate holdings, how the asset was acquired (e.g., purchase, inherit, divorce, gift), and the source of market valuation. Owners must also detail in section 6, the nature of the personal property or assets, such as automobiles and other vehicles, their household goods, and any accounts receivable, placing a value on such items in the appropriate column. We added a column to this section asking whether any of these assets are insured. We envision recipients (again on a case-by-case basis) may wish to request copies of any insurance valuation on these assets listed as insured and copies of notes or liens. Sections 7 (value of other business investments) and 9 (transfer of assets) are unchanged. Owners of the Department’s PNW form and require applicants to list these activities as described.

We have decided not to require submission of the PNW form by the spouse of a disadvantaged owner who is not involved in the operations of the business. We agree that such a requirement is unduly burdensome for the applicant and the certifier, needlessly intrudes into the affairs of individuals who are not participants in the program, and is not necessary since certifiers may request this information as needed on a case-by-case basis, but not as a routine matter.

We also agree with the commenters urging us to extend the treatment of assets held by married couples to include domestic partnerships and civil unions that are legally recognized under State law. To this end, we have added a definition of spouse that includes same-sex or opposite-sex couples that are part of a domestic partnership or civil union recognized under State law. Concurrent with this final rule and as requested by many commenters, the Departmental Office of Civil Rights is making the form available for distribution in a screen-fillable portable document (PDF) format, which recipients may post on their Web sites and distribute to applicants as part of the DBE certification application process.

Economic Disadvantage 49 CFR 26.67

Since 2007, the Department has, through guidance, recommended that recipients take account of evidence that indicates assets held by an individual suggest he or she is not economically disadvantaged even though the personal net worth falls below the $1.32 million threshold that gives rise to a rebuttable presumption of economic disadvantage. The guidance reflects the Department’s view that the purpose and intent of the economic disadvantage criteria is to more narrowly tailor the program to only reach those disadvantaged individuals adversely impacted by discrimination and the effects of discrimination and to accomplish the goal of remedying the effects of discrimination. The presumption is by regulation rebutted when the individual’s personal net worth exceeds the $1.32 million cap. We proposed in the NPRM to codify the existing guidance to recognize that the presumption also may be rebutted if the individual’s personal net worth falls below the cap, but the individual is, in fact, too wealthy to be considered disadvantaged by any reasonable measure. To illustrate the point, the guidance notes that under some circumstances a person with a very expensive house, a yacht, and extensive real or personal property holdings may be found not to be economically disadvantaged.

The Department also sought comment on whether a more bright-line approach would be preferable, such as whether someone with an adjusted gross income over one million dollars for two or three years on his or her Federal income tax return should not be presumed to be economically disadvantaged, regardless of their personal net worth (as defined by this program).

The Department received 42 comments on this issue. The difficulties potential applicants and recipients experience regarding economic disadvantage were expressed by many of the commenters and their views were not limited to whether the $1.32 million personal net worth cap is reasonable. Commenters mentioned several difficulties with both the current rule, the proposed codification of the “accumulation of substantial wealth” guidance, and the alternative bright-line approach tied to the adjusted gross income of the disadvantaged owners. Most commenters comprised of recipients, DBEs, and general contractors opposed amending the regulations to include the ability to accumulate substantial wealth as a basis for rebutting the presumption of economic disadvantage. The opponents viewed the proposal as vague, subjective, and likely to result in arbitrary decisions.

Many of the opponents of this approach believed that, if the Department were to finalize criteria for personal net worth beyond the existing calculation, a measure similar to the bright-line approach with varying adjusted gross income numbers over varying numbers of years would be preferable because it provides a more objective measure of whether an applicant is economically disadvantaged. Several commenters thought that the existing bright line of $1.32 million in personal net worth is sufficient. One commenter believes a bright-line approach helps certifiers because most are not accountants or tax experts. The Department also received comments specific to the application of the bright-line approach to S Corporations. Two commenters stated that using a bright-line approach was a false indicator for S Corporations in which the firm’s income is passed through to DBE shareholders and thus is not a reflection of a shareholder’s wealth. As defined by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, S Corporations are corporations that elect to pass corporate income, gains, losses, deductions, and credits through to their shareholders for federal tax purposes. One commenter did not
believe that a bright-line approach was appropriate for S Corporations and Limited Liability Corporations because owners of these entities recoup the profits on their personal returns in proportion to their ownership interests. The commenter went on to say that these entities distribute sufficient cash to their owners to enable them to pay income tax and this distribution does not increase the person’s net worth.

**DOT Response:** As noted in the NPRM, the purpose of this proposed regulatory amendment is to give recipients a tool to exclude from the program someone who, in terms of overall assets is what a reasonable person would consider to be a wealthy individual, even if one with liabilities sufficient to bring his or her personal net worth under $1.32 million. The Department continues to believe that this kind of tool must be available to ensure that the program truly benefits those for whom it is intended. We have seen in certification appeals upheld by the courts the reasoning of the court in application of this standard based on specific facts and circumstances in the entire administrative record that support the decision. See *SRS Technologies v. United States*, 894 F. Supp 2d 931 (D.D.C. 1995); *SRS Technologies v. United States*, 843 F. Supp. 740 (D.D.C. 1994).

We acknowledge the benefits of a bright-line approach (whether it is the adjusted gross income approach proposed in the NPRM or the current bright-line personal net worth cap that exists in regulations) and the potential for manipulation to fall within the bright-line. The Department strongly believes that recipients must be able to look beyond the individual’s personal net worth bottom line and consider his or her overall economic situation in cases where the specific facts suggest the individual is obviously wealthy with resources indicating to a reasonable person that he or she is not economically disadvantaged. Thus, the final rule incorporates the guidance but does not go beyond it as proposed. We have not included as factors “unlimited growth potential” or “has not experienced impediments to obtaining access to financing, markets, and resources.” We believe that those additional criteria are unnecessary because the essence of what we intend is captured in the “ability to accumulate substantial wealth” standard as evidenced by the individual’s income and the value of the various accumulated personal assets.

However, we are sympathetic to the concerns raised by many commenters that the subjective standard could lead to arbitrary decisions by recipients. To address this concern, we have included in the final rule specific factors recipients may consider in evaluating the economic disadvantaged status of an applicant or owner in this circumstance. Those factors include (1) whether the average adjusted gross income of the owner over the most recent three-year period exceeds $350,000; (2) whether the income was unusual and not likely to occur in the future (e.g., inheritance); (3) whether the earnings were offset by losses (e.g., winnings and losses from gambling); (4) whether the income was reinvested in the firm or used to pay taxes arising in the normal course of operations by the firm; (5) other evidence that income is not indicative of lack of economic disadvantage, and (6) whether the fair market value of all assets exceed $6 million. Similar factors are used by the Small Business Administration in its application of the economic disadvantage criteria to individuals seeking to participate in its Small Disadvantaged Business and 8(a) programs, which has long recognized the ability to accumulate substantial wealth as a basis for a finding of no economic disadvantage. The Federal courts have upheld consideration of income levels tied to the top 1–2% of high income wage earners in the United States to evaluate the economic disadvantaged status of a small business owner as reasonably based, not the subject of arbitrary decision making. Id. *SRS Technologies cases* cited above. As noted by the SBA, “. . . the average income for a small business owner is generally higher than the average income for the population at large and, therefore, what appears to be a high benchmark is merely reflective of the small business community.” See preamble to the 2011 SBA Final Rule, 76 FR 8222–01.

We stress that we are not, with this change, requiring that a recipient consider these factors for every disadvantaged owner whose PNW would be below the current regulatory cap. Instead, today’s final rule merely provides recipients who have a reasonable basis to believe that a particular owner should not be considered economically disadvantaged, despite their PNW, with the explicit authority to look at evidence beyond the PNW to determine whether that owner is truly economically disadvantaged. Further, the listed factors are simply intended to provide guidance to recipients on what kind of evidence they may look to in making this determination; it is not intended to be a checklist. An adjusted gross income below $350,000 may in appropriate circumstances indicate a lack of economic disadvantage. The determination should be based on the totality of the circumstances. Finally, as the final regulatory text clarifies, a recipient can only rebut the presumption of disadvantage under this standard through a proceeding that follows the same procedures as those used to remove a firm’s eligibility under § 26.87. The Department believes that this procedural safeguard makes it unlikely that recipients will proceed in attempting to rebut the presumption of disadvantage in all but the most egregious cases.

**Transfer of Assets** 49 CFR 26.67

Under existing guidance contained in Appendix E, assets that individuals have transferred two years prior to filing their certification application may be counted when calculating their PNW. The Department proposed to codify the guidance by placing it in the rule text at § 26.67. The proposed rule essentially attributes to an individual claiming disadvantaged status any assets which that individual has transferred to an immediate family member, or to a trust a beneficiary of which is an immediate family member, for less than fair market value, within two years prior to the submission of an application for certification or within two years of a participant’s annual program review. This transfer rule would not apply to transfers to, or on behalf of, an immediate family member for that individual’s education, medical expenses, or some other form of essential support or transfers to immediate family members that are consistent with the customary recognition of special occasions like birthdays, graduations, anniversaries, and retirements. We also proposed to expand the transfer rule to include transfers from the DBE owner to the applicant firm to ensure that such transfers are not used to enable the DBE owner to qualify for the program.

Most of the commenters, comprised largely of State departments of transportation and transit authorities, supported the proposed rule. Several commenters suggested there be no exception for transfers to a spouse and no exception where it can be demonstrated that the transfer was done to qualify for the program. Other commenters asked for clarification of certain terms (i.e., “transfer” or “essential support”) or a narrowing of the exclusions. The few commenters that opposed the proposed rule provided little detail.
**DOT Response:** The Department is adopting the rule with a minor modification to the text. We see no reason to treat a spouse differently than other immediate family members regarding the exception. We agree with commenters that the exceptions would not apply if there is evidence indicating that a transfer to an immediate family member was in fact designed to enable the disadvantaged owner to evade the PNW threshold and thereby qualify for the program or remain in the program. The burden is on the applicant or the participant to demonstrate that the transfer is covered by the exception. In our experience with the Appendix E guidance, recipients have not had difficulty applying the transfer restrictions. However, we will through guidance provide clarification of terms used in the rule if needed based on specific facts and circumstances presented to the Department.

**Certification Application Form**

The Department proposed a revised nationwide uniform DBE Certification Application Form to replace the one in use since 2003. In the 2003 proposed rule (68 FR 35542) at that time, we urged commenters to think about what must be contained in the application and what might be reserved for an on-site review. The resulting application reflected the Department’s goal of retaining the basic structure originating in the 1990 rule that was manageable and easy to follow for applicants who must fill out the form, while simultaneously being accessible and practical for the many recipients required to accept the form. We acknowledged a concern about keeping the application within reasonable limit, regarding its length and content, to prevent it from becoming too unwieldy and burdensome. We allowed recipients to supplement the form with written consent of the operating administration with a one to two page attachment containing the additional information collection requirements. We also required applicants to submit additional supporting documents not already required by the uniform application. We strongly suggested that the form be streamlined and that additional information should be sought during the on-site review rather than during the application process. As explained in the 2012 NPRM, the 2003 application was designed to be more streamlined and user-friendly, yet comprehensive enough to supply recipients with the necessary information to form their initial decision prior to and during an on-site visit. In addition, the application was designed to further assist recipients in making determinations as to an applicant’s eligibility for the DBE program.

In the Department’s view, the above objectives still hold true, especially now that we provide for interstate certification. Pursuant to the January 28, 2011, final rule revision, provisions for interstate certification were added requiring applicants to provide to State B a complete copy of their application form, all supporting documentation, and other information submitted to State A or other States wherein the firm is certified. The application, therefore, must serve the needs of both sets of certifiers by providing a window into a firm’s eligibility. As required by 49 CFR 26.73, eligibility determinations are to be based on present circumstances. The Department’s proposed application form as presented in the NPRM was longer in length than the existing form because of extra space added for applicants to write in their answer. We first noticed the need for more room for information in the course of processing denial and decertification appeals where information was sometimes handwritten and overflowing the strict margins of the old form. However, despite our intention to make the form more amenable for applicants to have the option to fully explain their responses directly on the form, commenters raised concerns about the length of the form.

**DOT Response:** In response to comments about length and more specific technical comments about various aspects of the proposed form, we have shortened the entry spaces and removed several details that in our experience were not useful to include in the application but may have been more suitable questions to pose during an on-site review, as needed. For example, in the banking information space, we removed the need to insert the bank’s phone number and address, but added a space identifying the names of individuals able to sign checks on the account. Similarly, in the bonding entry, we removed the need to specify the binder number, and the contact information of the bonding agent/broker. These items may be useful to a certifier, but we want to limit the amount of things an owner would have to “look up” to complete its application. The new form also removes obsolete material from the roadmap for applicants (page 1) and page 2 (e.g., relating to the long-expired Small Business Administration (SBA)—DOT Memorandum of Understanding). The final rule also contains new items that were in the proposed form we believe are important. First, the dates of any site visits conducted by other UCPs (besides the home State) are important facts that will enable certifiers to determine if any other certifier has assessed the firm’s eligibility as a DBE. If an entry here is checked, we encourage certifiers to obtain the site visit report and denial/decertification decisions from their UCP members or fellow certifiers in other States. Second, the new application offers ample space for a firm to provide a concise description of its primary activities, the products and/or services it provides, and the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes it believes apply to the firm. This description will help certifiers prepare for their on-site visit but also assign NAICS codes and list the firm properly in the UCP online directory if certified.

One section of the old form that deserves more explanation as to why it was revised is the area where applicants are asked to specify by name, title, ethnicity, and gender the firm’s management personnel who control several key areas, such as financial decisions, estimating and bidding, contract negotiation, field supervision, etc. In crafting the NPRM, we believed then, as we do now, that some of these entries could be reworded or broken down into sub-questions and we have incorporated these changes in the new form. For instance, “sets policy for company direction/scope of operations,” “hire and fire field staff or crew,” and “attend bid opening and lettings,” are new entries that examine more broadly the authority and responsibility roles of the majority owner vis-à-vis others in the firm. A more descriptive parenthetical is offered for “office management,” which now adds billing, accounts receivable/payable, etc. within the entry.

We have also added a feature we modelled after a few certifying agencies who supplemented their form with a chart for applicants to specify the frequency by which owners and key management personnel perform the relevant tasks. Applicants will now circle, in the appropriate rows, how often a person is involved in the functions identified as: “always”, “frequently”, “seldom”, or “never.” These types of responses are very common across all certifiers who often ask this question during the on-site review. At least one commenter opposed this addition believing that assessing the amount of time owners and others devote implies that if they do not spend time in the field and supervise operations they are not in charge of the firm; and small business owners...
frequently spend time arranging office-related matters (insurance, banking, accounting, etc.) to keep a business operational. We believe at a minimum, certifiers need to understand who does what, where, and for how long, when they assess owners’ control of their firm. It is our intent that this simple breakdown of the frequency of the tasks identified will aid certifiers as they prepare for their on-site review of the owners, enabling them to ask targeted questions concerning the owners’ control of their firm. The Department does not intend for certifiers to treat the new frequency chart as independently determinative of a firm’s eligibility; rather, it is a tool to narrow the areas of further inquiry.

The application checklist, a vital component of the process to becoming a DBE, has also been simplified and divided into mandatory and optional items. Items from the original checklist have been left largely intact. However, to ease the paperwork burden, some are now no longer mandatory for all applicants (e.g., trust agreements held by any owner claiming disadvantaged status, year-end balance sheets and income statements for the past 3 years (or life of firm, if less than 3 years)). The Department intends for recipients to request and collect only the information necessary to determine eligibility. Smaller businesses with simple structures should not be subjected to unnecessarily burdensome data requests. We re-emphasize here that an owner’s affidavit of certification attests to the fact that the information submitted is true and correct. Applicants should not be penalized for not having (or being unable to produce) items from the optional documentation list. Recipients should base eligibility decisions on the information they receive from the applicant.

To help simplify the data collection, we also clarified that the request for all applicants to submit tax returns should be limited to Federal not State returns. Two items identified in the NPRM were added to the checklist—the resumes of key personnel for the firm and any firm requests for current year federal tax return filing extensions. Résumés of key personnel are frequently requested of the applicant or provided voluntarily and should be readily available.

Various miscellaneous comments focused on the role of the Department in the certification process, with commenters suggesting that we host an on-line system for applications. Such a system would be difficult for the Department to manage and not in keeping with the delegation of the certification function to recipients and others through their UCPs. We will conspicuously post the uniform certification application, instructions, certification affidavit, and checklist on the Departmental Office of Civil Rights Web site, https://www.civilrights.dot.gov. A handful of commenters (including a member of Congress) spoke to the idea that newly established firms should only be required to complete a shorter more simplified form. In response, we note that newer firms may not have the level of documentation a larger firm will and can easily enter “n/a” (not applicable) in the entries provided. In the interest of uniformity, it is more beneficial to require all applicants to submit the standardized form. We remind certifiers that a firm lacking certain documentation or a history of providing a particular good or service is, under 49 CFR 26.73(b), not necessarily ineligible for certification.

Uniform Report of DBE Awards or Commitments and Payments, Appendix B

The Department proposed several changes to the Uniform Report of DBE Awards or Commitments and Payments (Uniform Report) designed to address concerns regarding the absence of data on women-owned DBE participation by race, confusing instructions, the differing needs of the various types of businesses/organizations participating in the program, and the collection of payments to DBEs on a “real time” basis. In response, we proposed to: (1) Create separate forms for general DBE reports and projects reports; (2) clarify the instructions; (3) collect information on minority women-owned DBEs; and (4) collect information on actual payments to DBEs on ongoing contracts performed during the reporting period (i.e., real time). The proposed forms in the NPRM kept the standard format but provided clearer instructions for completing some fields. We also proposed a surrogate for comparing DBE payments to the corresponding DBE commitment to respond to concerns raised by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in its 2011 report on the adequacy of using DBE commitment data to determine whether a recipient is meeting its overall DBE goal. As we explained in the NPRM, the GAO criticized the existing form because it did not permit DOT to match recipients’ DBE commitments in a given year with actual payments made to DBEs on the contracts to which the commitments pertained. The existing form required recipient to separately keep track of all funds that are committed to DBEs in contracts let each year. However, the “achievements” block on the form refers to DBE payments that took place during the current year, including payments relating to contracts let in previous years, but could not include payments relating to contracts let in the current year that will not be made until future years.

Thirty-six (36) commenters addressed some aspect of the proposed changes to the existing Uniform Report. The majority of commenters agreed that the Uniform Report needs changes. Six commenters expressed general support for the proposed revisions and six expressed general opposition. Three commenters asked for simplified reporting requirements.

The collection of data on women-owned DBEs based on race/ethnicity drew comments from four general contractors associations, two of which suggested that the Department is creating additional requirements beyond what Congress intended in MAP-21. One commenter expressed the view that the breakout of DBE participation data by gender and race does nothing to improve the program and serves no purpose. Another commenter stated that prime contractors should not be responsible for gathering and reporting the racial classification of the women-owned DBE firms used on a project and that the data should not be used by the Department to set separate goals for women based on race.

The proposal to collect actual “real time” payment data on ongoing contracts drew a number of comments, many of which were favorable. Supporters viewed the information as a better snapshot of DBE participation and more closely connected to the overall DBE goal in some instances than is obtained through the existing collection of payment data on completed contracts. Proponents of this view include the Transit Vehicle Manufacturers (TVMs) who would like to submit data only on current payments, as well as some recipients that undertake mega projects (e.g., design/build) that may not show DBE activity at the outset. Some opponents thought the opposite, preferring to report payments on completed contracts to payments on ongoing contracts because, in their view, one can make the final comparison between the contract goal and actual payments to DBEs. One opponent was more concerned with the potential for the Department to incorrectly judge the recipients’ overall performance, based on the payment data on ongoing contracts since the data may be affected by project schedules, project delays, change orders, and weather, all factors that impact the
schedule of DBE work and therefore payments to DBEs on a project. Another commenter expressed grave concerns about reporting on the current payment status of all active federally-assisted projects, citing the significant resources required and the challenge presented for those with electronic or paper processes. Two commenters suggested that the Department define “ongoing contracts” and one commenter asked for a definition of “completed contract.”

To address concerns raised by the GAO about the lack of a match between DBE commitments in a given year and the actual payments to DBEs on the contracts pertaining to the commitments, the NPRM sought to provide options for connecting work committed to DBEs with actual payments to the committed DBEs that are credited toward the overall goal for a particular year. One option was to collect data in 3–5 year groupings and calculate the average amount of commitments and the average amount of payments, providing a reasonable approximation for comparing the extent to which commitments result in actual payments over a specified period of time. Alternatively, a proposed modification to the existing form that would track payments credited to contracts let over a 5-year period was described in the preamble in an attempt to reach the result the GAO recommended. However, we acknowledged that it would take several years to determine the extent to which commitments resulted in payments that enabled a recipient to meet the relevant overall DBE goal and that the collection and reporting of this data would involve greater resources by recipients that may yield information of limited use for program administration and oversight purposes. We invited the public to offer other ideas that would meet the accountability and program administration objectives of the Department.

Comments on this issue supported the idea but did not think the proposed options would produce current usable information. One commenter indicated that making programmatic changes 3 years after the data is collected seems irrelevant. A State department of transportation objected to the administrative burden of accumulating and reporting data over several years, diverting resources from the “good work” of the DBE program for this purpose. In fact, of the six commenters who registered disapproval, four did so because of the level of effort needed to maintain this data. Two of the opponents did not think the proposals sufficiently addressed the GAO’s concerns. One commenter suggested that the Department establish a workgroup with external stakeholders to address the GAO’s concern.

**DOT Response:** The Department has decided to make final the revisions to the Uniform Report and the accompanying instructions to be used by all recipients for general reporting, project reporting, and reporting by TVMs. The proposed “general reporting” and “project reporting” forms published in the NPRM were identical in format and content. The difference between the proposed forms lies in the instructions for completing one part of the form (Section A) when reporting on a project versus general reporting on DBE participation achieved during a specified period of time. Thus, the same form will be used by recipients for the different purposes as is done currently. Recipients will be expected to use the revised form to report on activity in Federal Fiscal Year 2015 (October 1, 2014–September 30, 2015). For example, the first report for FHWA and FTA recipients using the revised form will be due June 1, 2015 for the period beginning October 1, 2014 through March 31, 2015. The second report will be due December 1, 2015 for the period April 1, 2015 through September 30, 2015. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) recipients will use the revised forms when they submit the annual report that is due December 1, 2015. Each operating administration will provide technical assistance and guidance to their recipients to ensure they understand what is required in each field for general reporting, project reporting, and reporting by TVMs. Collecting data on DBE participation by minority women will enable the Department to more fully respond to Congressional inquiries.

Actual payment data on ongoing contracts collected in Section C of the report applies to work on federally-assisted contracts performed during the reporting period. Payment data collected in Section D on completed contracts applies to contracts that the recipient has determined to be fully performed and thereby completed. No more work is required to be performed under the completed contract. In both instances, the data on payments to DBEs provides a “snapshot” of monies actually paid to DBEs, compared to dollars committed or awarded to DBEs but not yet paid, during the reporting period. The payment data on completed contracts allows recipients and the Department to determine success in meeting contract goals, while the payment data on ongoing contracts, over time, may provide some indication of how well yearly overall goals are being met.

The Department is sensitive to the concerns raised by commenters about the practicality of the proposals offered in response to the GAO report. The additional payment data for work performed during the reporting period on ongoing contracts may enable us to better assess the adequacy of the existing comparisons used to determine how well annual overall goals are being met through dollars expended with DBEs. Because most DOT-assisted contracts are multi-year contracts, payments made pursuant to those contracts will cross more than one fiscal year. However, in those cases where the yearly overall DBE goal does not change radically from year to year, the on-going payment data may provide a closer match than currently exists. For now, reliance on contractual commitments made during the fiscal year to determine the extent to which overall DBE goals for that fiscal year are met provides a reasonable proxy. The Department will continue to explore ways of addressing the GAO’s concern that are likely to produce “real-time,” useful information that does not strain existing recipient resources.

**MAP–21 Data Reports**

MAP–21 reauthorized the DBE program and included Congressional findings on the continued compelling need for the program. Section 1101(b)(4) of the statute included a long-standing but not yet implemented statutory requirement that States notify the Secretary in writing of the percentage of small business concerns that are controlled by: (1) Women, (2) socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (other than women), and (3) individuals who are women and are otherwise socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. The statute also directs the States to include the location of the aforementioned small businesses. The Department proposed to implement this requirement through the State Unified Certification Programs (UCP) that maintain statewide directories of all small businesses certified as DBEs. The information required by MAP–21 would be submitted to the Departmental Office of Civil Rights, the lead agency in the Office of the Secretary responsible for overseeing DOT implementation of the DBE program. For those firms that fall into more than one of the three categories, we proposed that the UCP agencies include a firm in the category applicable to the owner with the largest stake in the firm who is also involved in controlling the firm. We sought
comment on whether the Uniform Report of DBE Awards or Commitments and Payments should be the vehicle used to report the MAP–21 information.

Five commenters directly addressed this proposal. Only one of the commenters, a DBE contractor advocacy organization, opposed the collection and reporting of this information, stating that it serves no purpose. Four commenters support reporting the MAP–21 information separately from the Uniform Report and the advocacy organization suggested that the information should be submitted near the beginning of the fiscal year (October 15) to be consistent with other MAP–21 reporting requirements, as it would also be helpful for the purposes of those recipients involved in the program to have that information early. One commenter thought it would be more efficient to include it with the Uniform Report and that it could provide useful comparative data.

**DOT Response:** The Department has decided to require each State department of transportation, on behalf of the UCP, to submit the MAP–21 information to the Departmental Office of Civil Rights each year by January 1st, beginning in 2015. Most State departments of transportation are certifying agencies within the UCP; those who are not certifying agencies are, nonetheless, members of the UCP and share in the responsibility of making sure the UCP complies with DOT requirements. We agree that the information should not be reported on the Uniform Report; instead, it should be reported in a letter to the Director of the Departmental Office of Civil Rights. As indicated in the NPRM, to carry out this requirement, the UCPs would go through their statewide unified DBE directories and count the number of firms controlled, respectively, by: (1) White women, (2) minority or other men, and (3) minority women, and then convert the numbers to percentages, showing the calculations. The information reported would include the location of the firms in the State; it would not include ACDBEs in the numbers.

**Certification Provisions**

**Size Standard** *49 CFR 26.65*

The Department proposed to adjust the statutory gross receipts cap from $22.41 million to $23.98 million for inflation and to clarify that the size standard that applies to a particular firm is the one appropriate to the firm’s primary industry classification. To qualify as a small business, the average annual gross receipts of the firm (including its affiliates) over the previous three fiscal years shall not exceed this cap. Of the 23 comments received from State departments of transportation, UCPs, transit authorities, and representatives of DBEs and general contractors, most supported the increase in the size standard and a few suggested it be made effective immediately. Those that opposed the change (and some of the supporters) asked that the Department clarify what is meant by “primary industry classification.”

**DOT Response:** The Department is amending the gross receipts cap for the financial assistance programs in 49 CFR Part 26 as proposed to $23.98 million to ensure that the opportunity of small businesses to participate in the DBE program remains unchanged after taking inflation into account. Under MAP–21 Section 1101(b)(2)(A) the Secretary of Transportation is instructed to make the adjustment annually for inflation. With this adjustment, if a firm’s gross receipts, averaged over the firm’s previous three fiscal years, exceed $23.98 million, then it exceeds the small business size limit for participation in the DBE program. We remind recipients that firms are not eligible as DBEs if they exceed the relevant NAICS code size limitation for the type(s) of work the firm seeks to perform in DOT-assisted contract, which may be lower than $23.98 million and may not constitute the primary business of the firm. The term “primary industry classification” is currently defined in the DBE program regulations at 49 CFR 26.5. To avoid blanket approval or blanket reservations. Twenty commenters exclusively supported the proposals while thirteen expressed concerns with at least some of the changes.

A clear majority of recipients and UCPs supported most changes as providing clarity and ensuring program integrity. Private parties and trade associations, with some exceptions, expressed concern that the proposals overreached—by being too stringent, subjective, or burdensome to administer. More than a few commenters suggested that the proposals, if adopted, would discourage legitimate DBE participation, lead to inconsistent certification results across jurisdictions, or trap worthy but unsophisticated owners.

A transportation company opined that the “substantial and complex revisions and additions” to § 26.69 would require firm owners to attend “a workshop to understand the criteria;” would require recipients to employ staff with real estate, accounting, business management, and finance expertise; and would require the Department to...
conduct nationwide training in a classroom setting. Some State transportation departments similarly objected that the careful scrutiny conditions would increase recipient time spent evaluating financial records and require hiring outside experts at added expense. A former Department official noted that this provision could create unwarranted barriers to program entry because in situations involving non-bank financing, “the list of five items required in the proposed § 26.69(k) could be quite difficult to produce.”

Regarding the proposed change to the spousal renunciation rule, a transit authority proposed that DOT scrap the rule as “unduly burdensome” and allow spousal renunciations that occur at least two years after the use of marital assets to acquire an ownership interest in an applicant firm, provided that “the transfer was not made solely for the purposes of obtaining DBE certification.” DBE firm counsel and at least one State department of transportation objected to the renunciation rule as unduly burdensome, requiring excessive owner sophistication regarding certification standards, and discriminatory against DBEs in community property states. One trade association “enthusiastically” supported the ownership changes, however, particularly the new marital assets rule, and a transportation department urged that DOT provide new guidance regarding when a spouse’s transfer is considered to be for the purpose of obtaining certification. Another transportation department feared that the renunciation rule would lead to fewer women owners qualifying for the DBE program; it requested that DOT generally “explain more specifically what types of documents” are sufficient to substantiate a firm’s capitalization, including the source of funds. Finally, an association of women contractors criticized the renunciation proposal as a Catch-22 (renunciation indicates “forethought to DBE creation”) that may be contrary to State law and current certification rules.

**DOT Response:** The Department carefully considered, evaluated, and weighed comments on both sides. We adopted some provisions as proposed (e.g., § 26.69(c)) and rejected others due to stakeholder concerns and possible unintended consequences.

We retain the existing marital asset provision of § 26.69(i) as currently written and do not adopt the proposed change to require spousal renunciation contemporaneous with the transfer. To adopt such a change might unnecessarily inhibit applicants from allocating marital assets in such a way so that a disadvantaged spouse can establish and fund their business using marital funds. The current rule has adequate protections in place to prevent a non-disadvantaged spouse from retaining ownership of marital assets used to acquire ownership of an applicant firm or of an ownership interest in the firm. As long as the non-disadvantaged spouse irrevocably renounces and transfers all rights in the assets/ownership interest in the manner sanctioned by State law in which either spouse or the firm is domiciled (as the rule currently provides), we see no reason to require a renunciation at the time of the transfer. Recipients should not view a firm’s submission of renunciation contemporaneous with its application as precluding eligibility.

Regarding the careful scrutiny conditions in the proposed changes in § 26.69(k), we think it prudent not to finalize the revisions pending further study and review. Our proposal would have required careful scrutiny of situations where the disadvantaged owners of the firm obtain interests in a business or other assets from a seller-financed sale of the firm or in cases where a loan or proceeds from a non-financial institution was used by the owner to purchase the interest. The goal was to guard against seller-financed acquisitions (whether stock or assets) intended to disguise a non-disadvantaged owned business as a DBE firm. We agree with commenters that as written, the proposed language imposition of conditions on transactions would be difficult for recipients to implement and has the potential of unfairly limiting the range of legitimate arrangements.

The Department adopts a revision we proposed to § 26.69(c)(3), which currently requires that a firm’s disadvantaged owners must “share in the risks and profits commensurate with their ownership interests, as demonstrated by the substance, not merely the form, of arrangements.” This concept has proven difficult for certifiers to implement because of the tendency to interpret the phrase “profits commensurate with their ownership interests” to mean that the disadvantaged owners must be the highest paid persons in the firm, and to tie in § 26.71(i)’s mandate to “consider remuneration” differences between disadvantaged owners and other participants in the firm. We clarify here in this preamble and in the final rule for ownership purposes of § 26.69, the disadvantaged owners should be entitled to the profits and loss commensurate with their ownership interests; and any terms or practices that give a non-disadvantaged individual or firm a priority or superior right to a firm’s profits are grounds for denial of certification. This added provision is meant to be broad and is not absolute. There may be circumstances, particularly in franchise situations, where such an arrangement may be acceptable.

**Control 49 CFR 26.71**

Regarding control, the NPRM proposed clarifications to the rules concerning the involvement of non-disadvantaged individuals in the affairs of the firm by establishing more stringent requirements to ensure the disadvantaged owner(s) is in control of the company. To that end, the Department proposed to delineate some situations, circumstances, or arrangements (through examples) in which the involvement of a non-disadvantaged individual who is a former employer of the disadvantaged owner(s) may indicate a lack of control by the disadvantaged owner(s) and consequently may form the basis for denying certification. The examples included situations where the non-disadvantaged former employer controls the Board of Directors, contrary to existing requirements in 49 CFR 26.71(e); provides critical financial, bonding, or license support that enables the former employer to significantly influence business decisions; and loan arrangements or business relationships that cause dependence that prevents the disadvantaged owner from exercising independent judgment without great economic risk. In such cases, the recipient must determine that the relationship between the non-disadvantaged former employer and the disadvantaged individual or concern does not give the former employer “actual control or the potential to control” the DBE. The NPRM sought comment on whether there should be a presumption that non-disadvantaged owners who ostensibly transfer ownership and/or control to a disadvantaged person and remain involved with the firm in fact continue to control the firm.

Most of the commenters that addressed these proposed changes, many of whom were State departments of transportation, supported the change. Specific control-related comments included a UCP objecting to the proposed § 26.71(e) change as presuming misconduct and discouraging mentor-prote´ge´ relationships and spin-offs; and DBE counsel criticizing the proposed presumption as unnecessary and
antithetical to valid business and personal reasons for a non-disadvantaged person remaining associated with a DBE firm. A former DOT official likewise opined that the presumption could create unintentional barriers to entry “for the very firms that are intended to benefit from the program.” That official stated his view that when there is a legitimate business reason for the transfer, the firm should not be ineligible, even if DBE certification “may have been part of the motivation.” A member of Congress recommended that the Department hold “additional stakeholder input sessions,” particularly concerning paperwork and other burdens on DBE firms, applicants, and UCP/recipient staff.

**DOT Response:** As indicated in the NPRM, control is essential to program integrity designed to ensure that the benefits of the program reach the intended beneficiaries. The Department has decided to finalize the presumption of control by non-disadvantaged owners who remain involved in the company after a transfer. We emphasize that the presumption is rebuttable. Mentor-protégé relationships that conform to the guidance provided at 49 CFR 26.35 would rebut the presumption. Similarly, some of the explanations for continued involvement by the non-disadvantaged previous owner offered by one of the commenters may also rebut the presumption. For example, remaining with the firm to maintain contacts with previous customers, remaining temporarily to assist with the transfer, or maintaining a minority-ownership interest or minimal participation in the firm with no control of the company may rebut the presumption. Also, we have removed the phrase “actual control or the potential to control” to avoid muddying the concept; “control” is the issue.

We have removed the examples from the final rule because, upon further reflection, we believe they describe conduct that the rule itself prohibits or they are not helpful and may cause more confusion.

**Prequalification 49 CFR 26.73**

The Department proposed to revise the current provision at 49 CFR 26.73 to disconnect prequalification requirements (e.g., State or local conditions imposed on companies seeking to bid on certain categories of work) from certification requirements. As stated in the NPRM, the proposed change has the effect of not allowing prequalification to be used as a criterion for certification under any circumstances. This change would not prohibit the use of prequalification requirements that may exist for certain kinds of contracts. However, the prequalification status of a firm would not be relevant to an evaluation of whether the firm meets the requirements for certification as a DBE (e.g., size, social and economic disadvantaged status of the owners, ownership, and control). We noted that prequalification requirements may not exist for doing business in all modes of transportation (e.g., highways versus transit).

Only a few commenters addressed this proposed change, with most in favor because they agree it has no relevance to certification. The opponents of the change (mostly general contractors) read this proposal as eliminating the prequalification requirements imposed under State law (e.g., Pennsylvania) for DBEs while such requirements continue to exist for non-DBEs.

**DOT Response:** The Department has decided to finalize the rule as proposed. In doing so, we believe that this change has no effect on existing State laws that require all contractors and subcontractors performing work on contracts let by State departments of transportation or other government entities to be prequalified. Under the final rule, the certifying entities in a State UCP are not permitted to consider whether a firm seeking certification as a DBE is or is not prequalified. Certifiers are to analyze only the factors relevant to DBE eligibility (Subpart D of the rule) and not incorporate other recipient business requirements like prequalification status in decisions pertaining to the applicant’s eligibility for certification in the DBE program, except as otherwise provided in the rules. Thus, a firm, once certified as a DBE, must satisfy any other applicable requirements imposed by the State on persons doing business with the State or in the State.

**Certification Procedures 26.83**

The Department proposed a variety of changes to the certification procedures that are set out at 49 CFR 26.83.

**Additional Information Requirements**

The Department proposed several changes to strengthen the process by which recipients evaluate the eligibility of a firm to be certified as a DBE and remain certified as a DBE. These proposed changes were intended to enable recipients to better assess the extent to which disadvantaged individuals own and control the kind of work the firm is certified to perform by: (1) Requiring key personnel be interviewed as part of the mandatory on-site review; (2) requiring the on-site visit be performed at the firm’s principal place of business; (3) clarifying what should be covered in a review of the legal structure of a firm; (4) requiring the review of lease and loan agreements, bank signature cards, and payroll records; (5) obtaining information on the amount of work the firm has performed in the various NAICS codes in which the firm seeks certification; (6) clarifying that the applicant (the firm, its affiliates, and the disadvantaged owners) must provide income tax returns (Federal only) for the last three years; and (7) expressly authorizing the certifying agency to request clarification of information contained in the application at any time during the application process.

Most of the commenters (primarily State departments of transportation) supported the idea of interviewing key personnel, though several noted (as did the opponents) the increased administrative burden it may place on agency staff and suggested it be made an optional practice. Several opponents questioned the need for such interviews and expressed concern about the focus on the involvement of the disadvantaged owner “in the field,” which is part of the rationale given by the Department for requiring key personnel interviews.

The proposal to request information on the amount of work performed in the NAICS code assignments requested by an applicant generated a fair number of comments opposed to the idea. The reasons for the opposition included concerns about the burden such a requirement would impose, the discriminatory impact it may have, the extent to which it contradicts or conflicts with the requirements of 49 CFR 26.73(b)(2), and the means to be used to determine the “amount” of work. Nearly all those who commented on this provision argued that the proposal to require three years of tax returns should only apply to Federal returns; State returns were viewed as unnecessary or not useful. Lastly, some commenters representing DBEs thought the proposal expressly authorizing certifiers to request clarification of information in the application at any time was too open-ended and needed to be limited.

**DOT Response:** The Department has decided to modify its proposed amendment to 49 CFR 26.83(c)(1) to leave it to the discretion of recipients whether key personnel identified by the recipient should be interviewed as part of the on-site review, to eliminate the proposal that applicants provide
information about the amount of work the firm has performed in the NAICS codes requested by the firm, and to only require Federal tax returns for the past 3 years. It is not the intent of the Department to create unnecessary administrative burdens for applicants or certifiers. We agree that the focus on the amount of work a DBE performs in a given NAICS code could be misinterpreted and applied in a way that adversely impacts newly formed start-up companies. In the DBE program, there is no requirement that a DBE perform a specific percentage of work for NAICS code assignment purposes. We are adopting the other proposed changes in § 26.83(c)(1).

By finalizing in the rule (§ 26.83(c)(4)) what is currently implied—that certifiers may seek clarification from applicants of any information contained in the application material—we are not conferring carte blanche authority to certifiers to request additional information beyond that which is currently allowed and subject to prior approval from the concerned operating administration pursuant to 49 CFR 26.83(c)(7). In the context of this rule change, the word “clarification” is to be given its commonly understood dictionary meaning—to be free of confusion or to make reasonably understandable. In other words, if the application material is unclear, confusing, or conflicting, the certifying agency may ask the applicant to clarify information already provided.

Certification Reviews

Under the current rule, recipients may conduct a certification review of a firm three years from the date of the most recent certification or sooner if appropriate in light of changed circumstances, a complaint, or other information affecting the firm’s eligibility. The Department proposed to remove the reference to three years and instead clarify that a certification review should occur whenever there has been a change in the DBE’s circumstances (i.e., a notice of change filed by the DBE), whenever a recipient becomes aware of information that raises a genuine question about the continued eligibility of a firm, or after a specified number of years set forth in the UCP agreement. The important point here is that a recipient may not, as a matter of course, require all DBEs reapply for certification every three years or go through a recertification process every three years that essentially requires a DBE resubmit a new application and all the accompanying documentation to remain certified. As the rule currently states, “Once you have certified a DBE, it shall remain certified until and unless you have removed its certification, in whole or in part through the procedures of § 26.87.”

DOT Response: Only a handful of commenters addressed this proposal. They uniformly supported it. The Department is finalizing the change as proposed.

Annual Affidavit of No Change

The Department proposed to require the submission every year of several additional documents to support the annual affidavit of no change DBEs currently file with recipients on the anniversary date of their certification. The additional documentation would include an updated statement of personal net worth, a record of any transfers of assets by the disadvantaged owner for less than fair market value to a family member within the preceding two years, all payments from the firm to the officers, owners, or directors, and the most recent Federal tax return.

Commenters were evenly divided among those who support the proposed change (mostly recipients) and those who oppose the change (mostly DBEs). Some commenters suggested the recipients be given the discretion to request the additional information if questions are raised about a DBE’s status and others thought the Department should develop a uniform affidavit to be used by all.

DOT Response: The Department has decided to retain the existing rule and expressly provide for the submission of updated Federal tax information with the annual affidavit of no change, in addition to other documentation supporting the firm’s size and gross receipts, which is currently required in 49 CFR 26.83(j) (“The affidavit shall specifically affirm that your firm continues to meet SBA business size criteria and the overall gross receipts cap of this part, documenting this affirmation with supporting documentation of your firm’s size and gross receipts.”). We are not adopting the proposal to annually require the submission of documentation beyond that which is currently required. We agree that the yearly submission of the additional documentation proposed in the NPRM would be unduly burdensome for DBEs and certifiers alike, is contrary to the basic premise underlying the “no change affidavit,” and begins to look like a reexamination of eligibility. Recipients have sufficient authority under current rules to request information from a DBE in individual cases if there is reason to believe the DBE may no longer be eligible to remain certified. See 49 CFR 26.83(h). With respect to the affidavit itself, the Department has developed a model affidavit for use by recipients that is posted on the Department’s Web site and sees no need, at this time, to require its use instead of other forms suitable for this purpose developed by recipients.

Certification Denial 49 CFR 26.86

We proposed to clarify the effect of an appeal to the Department of a certification denial decision on the start of the waiting period that limits when an applicant may reapply for certification. The proposed rule adds language that states the appeal of a denial of certification does not extend (or toll the start of) the waiting period. In other words, the waiting period begins to run the day after the final decision at the State level, regardless of whether the firm appeals that decision to the Department.

The Department received comments from State departments of transportation, one State UCP, and representatives of general contractors and DBEs. The opponents of the proposal argued that the appeal process should be allowed to resolve issues concerning applicant eligibility before the applicant is allowed to reapply, so that certifiers are not wasting time or expending resources better spent elsewhere reviewing another application from the same applicant that may present the same issues that are before the Department for decision on appeal. In contrast, supporters of the proposed change simply agreed without further comment, presumably accepting the change as clarifying in nature.

DOT Response: The Department believes that an applicant who appeals the denial of its application for certification should not have to wait until the appeal has been decided before it can reapply at the end of the waiting period. In many instances, the deficiency that is the subject of the appeal may be cured reasonably quickly. There are, further, various cases in which the waiting period expires before the Department can render a decision. There should be no penalty or disincentive to appealing an adverse certification decision; the Department intends that an appellant be no worse off than an applicant who does not appeal.

Decertification 49 CFR 26.87(f)

The Department proposed revisions to the grounds on which recipients may remove a DBE’s certification to protect from State or DBE program. The NPRM proposed to add three grounds for removal: (1) The certification
decision was clearly erroneous, (2) the DBE has failed to cooperate as required by 49 CFR 26.109, and (3) the DBE has exhibited a pattern of conduct indicating its involvement in attempts to subvert the intent or requirements of the program. The second and third grounds for removal are not new; the proposed revision simply places them among the existing list of five grounds for removal. As explained in the NPRM, the first ground revises the existing standard by replacing “factually erroneous” with “clearly erroneous” to address “situations in which a mistake [of fact or law] was committed, in the absence of which the firm would not have been certified.” The Department also sought comment on whether the suspension or debarment of a DBE should result in automatic decertification, should cause an evaluation of the DBE for decertification purposes, or should prompt some other action. Recipients were universally supportive of the proposal to add additional grounds for removal of a DBE from the program. Representatives of DBEs and general contractors also registered support. An organization representing a caucus of women-owned businesses in Chicago and a DBE from Alabama opposed the changes. The focus of the opposition centered on the appropriateness of allowing removal for failing to timely file an annual no change affidavit or notice of change (i.e., failure to cooperate) or removal for not performing a commercially useful function (i.e., a pattern of conduct). One commenter suggested there be a higher standard of proof (i.e., willful disregard) applied to situations that involve not filing an annual no change affidavit in recognition of the fact that many DBEs have multiple certifications and may inadvertently fail to timely file required documents.

Most of the nineteen commenters on the question concerning the relationship between decertification and suspension and debarment proceedings were recipients (i.e., State Departments of Transportation, transit authorities, and groups representing DBEs and general contractors) that overwhelmingly supported either the automatic decertification of a DBE that is suspended or debarred for any reason or the automatic decertification of a DBE that is suspended or debarred for conduct relevant or related to the DBE program. Five commenters opposed automatic decertification, suggesting instead that suspension and debarment should trigger an immediate evaluation of the DBE or should be a factor considered by the recipient based on the circumstances. One commenter suggested different treatment for suspensions and debarments: A debarment would result in permanent decertification, while a suspended DBE that is decertified could reapply at the end of the waiting period.

**DOT Response:** The Department has decided to make final the additional grounds for removal from the program. Two of the changes essentially represent a cross reference to existing regulations that permit removal for failure to cooperate and for a pattern of conduct indicating involvement in attempts to subvert the intent or requirements of the program. In the NPRM preamble discussion of this proposed change, we noted that the failure to cooperate covers such things as failing to send in affidavits of no change or notices of change and accompanying documents when needed. To be clear, the failure to cooperate is triggered when a DBE program participant fails to respond to a legitimate, reasonable request for information. If a DBE is notified by a recipient that it has not submitted the annual no change affidavit as required by the regulations, we would expect the DBE to respond promptly to such a request for information. Its failure to submit the requested information would be grounds for initiating a removal proceeding. Removal proceedings should not be initiated simply because the DBE failed to file the affidavit on its certification anniversary date, even though the information has been provided; nor should removal proceedings be continued once the DBE submits the requested information. When a DBE is suspended or debarred based on a Federal, State, or local criminal indictment or conviction, or based on agency fact based proceedings, for conduct related to the DBE program (i.e., the DBE or its owners were indicted or convicted for perpetrating a fraud on the program related to the eligibility of the firm to be certified or fraud associated with the use of the DBE as a pass through or front company), the Department believes the DBE should be automatically decertified from the DBE program. Under those circumstances, recipients should not be required to initiate a separate § 26.87 decertification proceeding to remove a DBE. The suspension and debarment process affords the DBE an opportunity to be heard on the evidence of misconduct related to the DBE program that is relied upon to support the denial of bidding privileges. The same evidence would be relied upon to support decertification of the DBE, making further proceedings unnecessary. The Department believes that suspensions or debarments unrelated to the DBE program and consequently not bringing into question the DBE’s size, disadvantage, ownership, control, or pattern of conduct to subvert the requirements of the program should not result in automatic removal from the DBE program. In those cases, recipients are advised to take appropriate action to note in the UCP directory the suspended or debarred status of the DBE. Because suspension or debarment actions are not permanent, we see no reason to make a decertification action permanent. Recipients must accept an application for certification from a previously suspended or debarred firm once the action is over.

**Summary Suspension of Certification**

The Department proposed to require the automatic or mandatory suspension of a DBE’s certification without a hearing when a recipient has reason to believe that one or more of the disadvantaged owners needed to meet the ownership and control requirements is incarcerated or has died. As we noted in the NPRM, a disadvantaged owner is considered necessary to the firm’s eligibility if without that owner the firm would not meet the requirement of 51 percent ownership by disadvantaged individuals or the requirement that disadvantaged owners control the firm. Other material changes affecting the eligibility of the DBE to remain certified—like the sale of the firm to a new owner, the failure to notify the recipient of a material change in circumstances, or the failure to file the annual no change affidavit as currently required—may be the subject of a summary suspension (at the discretion of the recipient) but such action would not be automatic. During the period of suspension, the recipient must take steps to determine whether proceedings to remove the firm’s certification should be initiated. While suspended, the DBE may not be counted toward contract goals on new contracts executed after the suspension but could continue to perform and be counted on contracts already underway. The recipient would have 30 days from receipt of information from the DBE challenging the suspension to determine whether to rescind the suspension or commence decertification proceedings through a UCP certifying entity.

Of the comments received from a combination of State departments of transportation, transit and airport authorities, and groups representing DBEs and prime contractors, almost all commenters supported this proposal as a much-needed program improvement.
arguing that suspending a DBE jeopardizes contracts that are a part of the assets of the company and consequently affects the valuation of the DBE. The group also suggested that there be some recognition of estate plans that provide for the child of the disadvantaged owner, who also may be a member of a presumptive group, to take over the firm. In such a case, the commenter posits that the DBE should remain certified if the heir submits an application within six months of the death of the disadvantaged owner. A State department of transportation did not agree that incarceration of the disadvantaged owner should result in an automatic suspension; instead, the State DOT believes the DBE should be removed from the program immediately.

There were several commenters that raised questions or suggested further clarification was needed in certain areas. For example, should the length of the period of incarceration or the reason for the incarceration matter in determining whether the DBE is suspended? Should suspended DBEs be entered in the Department’s ineligibility database? A commenter also suggested that if evidence of facts or information. A recipient must have based on ill-founded or mistaken safeguard against action by recipients procedural protections afforded DBEs to situation to preserve the integrity of the action should be taken to address that DBE occurs that directly affects the dramatic change in the operation of the premise underlying the summary suspension provision. The fundamental thing to DBE program certification. Likewise, automatic decertification assumes that the likelihood or risk of error is small compared to the interest in protecting the integrity of the program such that there is little to be gained from hearing from the DBE to safeguard against inadvertent errors.

Lastly, suspensions are temporary actions taken until more information is obtained from the affected DBE. Consequently, suspensions should not be entered into the Department’s ineligibility database, which is reserved for initial certification denial decisions and decertification actions taken by recipients after the DBE has been accorded a full hearing or an opportunity to be heard. We have taken steps to ensure that suspensions do not interfere with the ability of the DBE to continue working on a contract entered into before the suspension took effect. Thus, in this respect, a suspension is accorded the same treatment as the decertification of a DBE that occurs after a DBE has executed a contract. The same rationale applies. The Department is not persuaded that existing contracts that may be considered company assets will be placed in jeopardy if recipients are granted suspension authority.

Certification Appeals 49 CFR 26.89

The Department proposed clarifying amendments to the regulations governing appeals of certification decisions. The amendment would require appellant include in their letter of appeal a statement that specifies why the certification decision is erroneous, identifies the significant facts that were not considered by the certifying agency, or identifies the regulatory provision that was improperly applied. The amendment also would make clear that the Department’s decision on appeal is based on the entire administrative record including the letter of appeal. The Department received a handful of comments on this proposed amendment; all of the comments supported the clarifications. The commenters included a State transportation department, a UCP certifying agency, and several individuals and organizations that represent DBEs and ACDBEs.

DOT Response: The Department is finalizing the substance of the proposal with a slight modification to the rule text. The entire administrative record includes the record compiled by the certifying agency from whom the appeal is taken, the letter of appeal from the appellant that contains the arguments for reversing the decision, and any supplemental material made a part of the record by the Department in its
discretion pursuant to 49 CFR 26.89(e). We hope that this minor, technical, clarifying change will dispel the notion that the Department is not to consider any information outside of the record created by the recipient, including the appellant’s letter of appeal which necessarily comes after the recipient has created its record. The purpose of the appeal is to provide the appellant an opportunity to point out to the Department, through facts in the record and/or arguments in the appeal letter, why the certifying agency’s decision is not “supported by substantial evidence or inconsistent with the substantive or procedural provisions of [Part 26] concerning certification.” It is not an opportunity to add new factual information that was not before the certifying agency. However, it is completely within the discretion of the Department whether to supplement the record with additional, relevant information made available to it by the appellant as provided in the existing rule.

Other Provisions

Program Objectives 49 CFR 26.1

In the NPRM, the Department proposed to add to the list of program objectives: Promoting the use of all types of DBEs. This minor technical modification is intended to make clear that application of the DBE program is not limited to construction contracting; the program covers the various kinds of work covered by federally funded contracts let by DOT recipients (e.g., professional services, supplies, etc.). All of the commenters that addressed this modification supported it.

DOT Response: For the reasons expressed in the NPRM, the Department made this change in the final rule.

Definitions

The Department proposed to add six new definitions to the rule for terms used in existing provisions. The words or phrases to be defined for purposes of the DBE program include “assets;” “business, business concern, or business enterprise;” “contingent liability;” “days;” “liabilities;” and “transit vehicle manufacturer (TVM).” We also proposed to modify the existing definition of “immediate family member,” “primary industry classification,” “principal place of business,” and the definitions of “socially and economically disadvantaged individual,” and “Native American” to be in sync with the U.S. Small Business Administration use of those two terms. We invited comment on whether the definition of TVM should include producers of vehicles to be used for public transportation purposes that receive post-production alterations or retrofitting (e.g., so-called “cutaway” vehicles, vans customized for service to people with disabilities). We also wanted to know if the scope of the existing definition of “immediate family member” is too broad. It currently includes grandchildren.

Most commenters supported all or some of the proposed definitions. We did not include an actual definition of “non-disadvantaged individual” and consequently have not added that term to 49 CFR 26.5. The definitions that generated some opposition or suggested changes were those for TVMs, immediate family member, and Native American. We focus only on these three terms for discussion. One of the few TVMs that provided comments expressed puzzlement over the Department’s request for comment on whether producers of “cutaway” vehicles should be included in the TVM definition. According to the commenter, such companies, including its company that performs this type of manufacturing work, are indeed TVMs.

One commenter suggested we remove the word “immediate” from the term “family member” so that recipients may determine on a case-by-case basis whether an individual is considered an immediate family member. Another commenter thought grandparents and in-laws should be excluded, while a different commenter suggested we include “sons and daughters-in-law.” We also were asked to include “live-in significant others” to recognize domestic partnerships or civil unions. Regarding the definition of Native American, one commenter did not think it should be limited to recognized tribes.

DOT Response: The Department has modified the definition of TVM to include companies that cutaway, retrofit, or customize vehicles to be used for public transportation purposes. We do not think a change to the current approach of specifying in the rule who is considered an “immediate family member” in favor of leaving that determination to the certifying agency to decide case-by-case is the right policy choice. However, the Department has decided to modify the existing definition of “immediate family member” to keep it in sync with the existing definition of that term in Part 23. The revised definition includes brother-in-law, sister-in-law, or registered domestic partner and civil unions recognized under State law. In addition, the Department established a definition for the term “spouse” that covers domestic partnerships and civil unions because we agree such relationships should be recognized in the DBE program.

We are finalizing the changes to the definition of Native American to incorporate the requirement that an American Indian be an enrolled member of a federally or State-recognized Indian tribe to make it consistent with the SBA definition. By statute, the term “socially and economically disadvantaged individuals” has the meaning given the term in section 8(d) of the Small Business Act and relevant subcontracting regulations issued pursuant to that Act. As explained in the SBA final rule:

This final rule clarifies that an individual must be an enrolled member of a Federally or State recognized Indian Tribe in order to be considered an American Indian for purposes of the presumptive social disadvantage. This definition is consistent with the majority of other Federal programs defining the term Indian. An individual who is not an enrolled member of a Federally or State recognized Indian Tribe will not receive the presumption of social disadvantage as an American Indian. Nevertheless, if that individual has been identified as an American Indian, he or she may establish his or her individual social disadvantage by a preponderance of the evidence, and be admitted to the [DBE program] on that basis.

(76 FR 8222–01)

Record Keeping Requirements 49 CFR 26.11

The Department proposed to establish record retention requirements for certification related records to ensure that recipients maintain documents needed to conduct certification reviews when necessary. All records documenting a firm’s financial assistance with Part 26 must be retained in accord with the record retention requirements in the recipient’s financial assistance agreement. Only six commenters expressed a view about this proposed change. Three of the commenters supported the change, two commenters requested clarification on the kind of records to be retained and for how long, and one commenter was neutral.

DOT Response: The regulatory text of the final rule identifies the minimal records that must be retained. They include the application package for all certified DBEs, affidavits of no change, notices of change, and on-site reviews. Recipients are encouraged to retain any other documents that may be relevant in the event of a compliance review. The uniform administrative rules for Federal grants and cooperative agreements and sub-awards to State, local and Indian tribal governments establish a three-year record retention requirement subject to exceptions set out at 49 CFR 18.42. We
have modified the final rule to include a three year retention period as a default for records other than the minimal records specified in the rule. The 3 year retention period applied to other records may be modified as provided by applicable Federal regulations or the grant agreement, whichever is longer.

**DBE Program Requirement**

The current rule regarding the application of the DBE program requirement to recipients of the various operating administrations of DOT has been the source of confusion for some. The Department proposed modifications to the rule to eliminate the confusion so that recipients will be clear about their obligation to establish a program and the corresponding obligation to establish an overall DBE participation goal. For FTA and FAA recipients, you must have a DBE program if in any Federal fiscal year the cumulative value of DBE program eligible contracts you will award will exceed $250,000 in Federal funds. In other words, when you add all the eligible Federally funded contracts you expect to award with Federal funds, the aggregate of total Federal funds to be expended will exceed $250,000. For FHWA, the proposed modification makes clear that under FHWA's financial assistance program, its direct, primary recipients must have an approved DBE program plan, and sub-recipients are expected to operate under the primary recipient's FHWA-approved DBE program plans.

Comments generally were supportive of the proposed changes, particularly those related to the FTA and FAA clarification of the $250,000 threshold requirement. Some of the State departments of transportation that commented requested further clarification of the FTA and FAA requirements and had questions about the proposed change applicable to FHWA recipients. For example, a State department of transportation asked that we identify or define what is an eligible contract and that we specify whether the $250,000 threshold applies to the total Federal dollars spent in contracts or the total Federal dollars received in a fiscal year. One commenter also asked that we reconsider requiring subrecipients of FHWA funds operate under the primary recipient’s approved DBE program. Lastly, in situations where funding on a project is provided by more than one operating administration, a commenter suggested that the Department specify how that situation should be handled rather than direct recipients to consult the relevant DOT agencies for guidance.

**DOT Response:** The Department has finalized the proposed revisions. Where more than one operating administration is providing funding for a project or a contract, recipients should consult the Oa providing the most funding for the project or contract and the OA, in turn, will coordinate with the DOT agencies involved to determine how to proceed. The final rule applies the $250,000 amount to the total Federal dollars to be expended by an FTA or FAA recipient in contracts funded in whole or in part with Federal assistance during the fiscal year. The rule expressly excludes from this calculation expenditures for transit vehicle purchases.

The following examples illustrate how this provision works:

A. The Hypothetical Area Transit System (HATS) receives $500,000 in FTA assistance. It spends $300,000 of this amount on bus purchases. It is spending $800,000 in local funds plus the remaining $200,000 in FTA funds to build an addition to its bus garage. Because HATS is spending less than $250,000 in FTA funds on contracting, exclusive of transit vehicle purchases, HATS is not responsible for having a DBE program.

B. The Your County Regional Airport receives $400,000 in FAA financial assistance. It uses $100,000 to purchase land and expends $300,000 of the FAA funds for contracts concerning a runway improvement project, as well as $500,000 in local funds. The airport must have a DBE program.

In the first example, even though HATS does not have to have a DBE program, it still must comply with Subpart A requirements of 49 CFR Part 26, such as nondiscrimination (§ 26.7) and assurances (§ 26.13). Compliance with these requirements, like compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is triggered by the receipt of any amount of DOT financial assistance. In both examples, eligible contracts are federally funded prime contracts.

The requirement that subrecipients of funds from FHWA operate under the direct recipients’ approved DBE program is consistent with the way FHWA administers its financial assistance program regarding other Federal requirements imposed as a condition of receiving financial assistance. Through official guidance, the Department describes how subrecipients would administer contract goals on their contracts under the umbrella of the primary recipient’s DBE program and overall goals. The continued validity of that guidance is not affected by this rule change.

**Overall Goal Setting 49 CFR 26.45**

The Department proposed several changes to the regulations governing overall goal setting. They include: (1) Codifying the elements of a bidders list that must be documented and supported when a bidders list is used to establish the base figure for DBE availability under Step One in the goal setting analysis; (2) disallowing the use of prequalification or plan holders lists (and other such lists) as a means of determining the base figure and consider extending the prohibition to bidders lists; (3) establishing a standard for when Step Two adjustments to the base figure should not be made; (4) specifying that in reviewing recipient’s overall goal submission, the operating administrations are to be guided by the goal setting principles and best practices identified by the Department; (5) clarifying that project goals may reflect a percentage of the value of the entire project or a percentage of the Federal share; and (6) strengthening and streamlining the public participation requirements for goal setting.

The overwhelming majority of the comments received on the proposed changes to 49 CFR 26.45 were directed at the proposal to disallow use of prequalification lists and other such lists, including the bidders list, to establish the relative availability of DBEs (Step One of the goal setting analysis). Over 100 commenters, many of them general contractors who submitted form letters of objection, representatives of general contractors, and a few State departments of transportation, expressed the view that both prequalification lists and bidders lists are viable data sources for identifying qualified DBEs that are ready, willing, and able to perform on federally funded transportation contracts and that disallowing the use of these data sources would produce unrealistic overall goals that are not narrowly tailored as required by the United States Supreme Court to satisfy constitutional standards. Supporters of the proposal expressed the view that such lists underestimate availability and the true continuing effects of discrimination, represent the most conservative approach, and limit DBE opportunities by restricting consideration of all available DBEs. Other commenters, recognizing the limitations and the benefits of such lists, suggested that the lists should not be the exclusive source of data relied upon to capture the pool of available DBEs. Some commenters supported retaining use of the prequalification list but supported getting rid of the bidders list which it
believed is worse than the prequalification list.

Commenters opposed to identifying the elements of a true bidders list (including successful and unsuccessful DBE and non-DBE prime contractors and subcontractors) suggested it might be difficult to compile such a list (i.e., capturing the unsuccessful firms—both DBEs and non-DBEs—bidding or submitting quotes on projects). Despite that concern, of the few commenters that addressed this proposal, most commenters supported it, which reflects the longstanding view of the Department, as set forth in the official tips on goal setting, of what a true bidders list should contain. With regard to the Step Two adjustment, nine of the twelve commenters opposed the change out of a belief that it effectively eliminates adjustments based on past participation by DBEs.

Commenters were almost evenly divided over the proposal to eliminate from the public participation process the requirement that the proposed overall goal be published in general circulation media for a 45-day comment period. Those objecting to this change were mostly representatives of general contractors and some State departments of transportation who viewed this process as more valuable than the stakeholder consultation process. There was universal support among the commenters for posting the proposed and final overall DBE goal on the recipient’s Web site.

**DOT Response:** The Department is retaining the bidders list as one of the approaches recipients may use to establish the annual overall DBE participation goal. To be acceptable, the bidders list must conform to the elements that we finalize in this final rule by capturing the data that identifies the firms that bid or quote on federally assisted contracts. This includes successful and unsuccessful prime contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, truckers, other service providers, etc. that are interested in competing for contracts or work. Recipients that use this method must demonstrate and document to the satisfaction of the concerned operating administration the mechanism used to capture and compile the bidders list. If the bidders list does not capture all available firms that bid or quote, it must be used in combination with other data sources to ensure that it meets the standard in the existing regulations that applies to alternative methods used to derive a base figure for the DBE availability estimate (e.g., “designed to attain a goal that is rationally related to the relative availability of DBEs in your market.”).

Prequalification lists and other such lists (i.e., plan holders lists) may be used but must be supplemented by other data sources on DBE availability not reflected in the lists. Looking only to prequalified contractors lists or similar lists to determine availability may serve only to perpetuate the effects of discrimination rather than attempt to remediate such discrimination. Thus, to summarize, a recipient may use a bidders list that meets the requirements of the final rule as the sole source in deriving its Step One base figure.

However, if its bidders list does not meet these requirements, that list can still be used in determining the overall goal, but must be used in conjunction with other sources. Under no circumstances, though, may a recipient use a prequalification or plan holders list as the sole source used to derive the overall goal.

The purpose of the Step Two analysis in overall goal setting is to consider other available evidence of discrimination or its effects that may impact availability and based on that evidence consider making an appropriate adjustment to derive an overall goal that reflects the level of DBE participation one would expect in the absence of discrimination. The amendment made to the regulations through this final rule does not eliminate the discretion recipients have to make a Step Two adjustment based on past DBE participation or other evidence like econometric data that quantifies the “but for discrimination” effects on DBE ownership. It recognizes, however, that where there are circumstances that indicate an adjustment is not necessary because, for example, the base figure and the level of past DBE participation are close or the DBE participation level reflects the effects of past or current noncompliance with DBE program regulations, then the evidence would not support making the adjustment. That said, it is incumbent upon recipients to explain to the operating administration why the adjustment is appropriate.

Instead of mandating publication of the proposed overall goal for a 45-day comment period, the Department decided to leave that decision to the discretion of the recipient. The proposal to eliminate this aspect of the existing public participation requirement was designed to reduce the administrative burden, expense, and delay associated with the publication requirement that is borne by recipients and often leads to few, if any, comments (i.e., not much value added). To the extent that some recipients view this as a worthwhile exercise, we see no reason to restrict their ability to allow additional comment through this process. In response to one commenter, we have reduced the comment period from 45 days to 30 days. Those recipients that choose to publish their overall goal for comment, in addition to engaging in the required consultation with stakeholders, must complete their process well before the deadline for submitting the overall goal documentation to the operating administration for review. As stated in the NPRM, the Department believes meaningful consultation with stakeholders is an important, cost-effective means of obtaining relevant information from the public concerning the methodology, data, and analysis that support the overall DBE goal. Once again, all public participation must be completed before the overall goal submission is provided to the operating administration. Failure to complete the publication process by those recipients that choose to conduct such a process should not delay review by the operating administration.

**Transit Vehicle Manufacturers** 49 CFR 26.49

The Department proposed to clear up confusion that exist about the goal setting and reporting requirements that apply to Transit Vehicle Manufacturers (TVMs). Specifically, the proposed rule clarifies how TVMs are to determine their annual overall DBE goals, when TVMs must report DBE awards and achievements data, and which portion of the DBE regulations apply to TVMs. Under the proposed rule, the goal setting methodology used by TVMs must include all federally funded domestic contracting opportunities made available to non-DBEs, not just those that apply to DBEs, and only the portion of the Federal share of a procurement that is available for contracts to outside firms is to be included. In other words, the DBE goal represents a percentage of the work the TVM will contract to others and not perform in house since work performed in-house is not truly a contracting opportunity available to the DBEs or non-DBEs. The Department sought comment on whether and how the Department should encourage more of the manufacturing process to be opened to DBEs and other small businesses.

With respect to reporting awards and achievements, the Department proposed to require TVMs continuously report their contracting activity in the Uniform Reports of DBE Awards/Commitments and Payments. In addition, the Department removed a requirement that the TVMs are responsible for implementing regulatory requirements similar to DOT.
recipients. There is one notable exception: TVMs do not participate in
the certification process (i.e., TVMs do not perform certification functions
required of recipients and are not required to be a member of a UCP), and
post-award requirements need not be followed in those years when a TVM is
not awarded or performing as a transit vehicle provider. Lastly, the NPRM
included a provision requiring recipients to document that only
certified TVMs were allowed to bid and submit the name of the successful
bidder in accordance with the grant agreement.

Only 12 commenters addressed various aspects of the proposed changes
to the TVM provisions. Three recipients supported the proposals as a whole,
while others raised questions about the recommended changes and/or
questioned existing requirements for which no change was proposed (e.g.,
suggested requiring the application of
tVM provisions to all kinds of highway
contracts or opposed the requirement
that only certified TVMs are permitted
to bid). One commenter rejected specific
areas of the proposed changes. There
was an additional comment submitted
by the owner of a TVM who commented
that it needed the services that the DBE
program provides, rather than being
forced into being a provider of those
services.

DOT Response: The Department is
confident that the proposed changes will strengthen compliance with TVM
provisions and oversight of TVMs by exempting manufacturers, and those
regulations that are not applicable
to this industry. Many of the proposed
changes simply clarify the intent and
practical application of existing TVM
provisions. For example, the existing
regulations require compliance, prior to
bidding, to confirm a TVM's
commitment to the DBE program before
it is awarded a federally-assisted vehicle
procurement. This is a long-standing
requirement. The proposal introduces
measures that help ensure pre-bid
compliance (e.g., viewing the FTA
certified TVM list and submitting the
successful bidder to FTA after the
award). The proposed changes also
confirm that TVM regulatory
requirements are nearly identical to that
of transit recipients. For this reason, the
FTA requires DBE goals from both
transit recipients and TVMs as a
condition of receiving Federal funds in
the case of recipients and as a condition
of being authorized to submit a bid or
proposal on FTA-assisted transit vehicle
procurements, in the case of TVMs.

In order to provide appropriate
flexibility in implementing this
provision, we must emphasize, to FTA
recipients in particular, that overly
prescriptive contract specifications on
transit vehicle procurements—which, in
effect, eliminate opportunities for DBEs
in vehicle manufacturing—counter the
intention of the DBE program and unduly
restrict competition. Moreover, after
request for proposals (RFPs) are
released, FTA recipients should allow
TVMs a reasonable timeframe to submit
bids. To do otherwise limits the TVMs' ability to locate and utilize ready,
will, and able DBEs on FTA-assisted
vehicle procurements. To lessen any
administrative burdens, the FTA will
continue posting a list of certified (i.e.,
compliant) TVMs to the FTA TVM Web
page. Recipients may also request
verification that a TVM has complied
with the regulatory requirement by
contacting the appropriate FTA
Regional Civil Rights Officer—via email.
FTA will respond to this request within
5 business days—via email.

Means Used To Meet Overall Goals 49 CFR 26.51

In the NPRM, we proposed to modify
the rule that sets forth examples of what constitutes race-neutral DBE
participation to remove as one of the
elements “selection of a DBE
subcontractor by a prime contractor that
did not consider the DBE's status in
making the award (e.g., a prime
contractor that uses a strict low-bid
system to award subcontracts).” We
explained that it is impossible for
recipients to determine if a prime
contractor uses a strict low-bid system,
and moreover, that such a system
conflicts with the good faith efforts
guidance in Appendix A that instructs
prime contractors not to reject a DBE’s
quote over a non-DBE quote if the price
difference is not unreasonable.

Although not stated explicitly in the
preamble, the proposed regulatory text
made clear that the Department’s
proposal was simply to eliminate the
statement “or even if there is a DBE
goal, wins a subcontract from a prime
contractor that did not consider its DBE
status in making the award (e.g., a prime
contractor that uses a strict low bid
system to award subcontracts)” from
the regulatory text (emphasis added). Thus,
as proposed, the Department only
intended to remove this example for
contracts that had a DBE goal.

Commenters, including general
contractors and State departments of
transportation, overwhelmingly
opposed the proposed change for a
variety of reasons. General contractors
and organizations representing
contractors viewed this proposal as a
major policy shift away from the use of
race-neutral measures to obtain DBE
participation, contrary to existing
regulations and relevant court decisions. One commenter actually referred to
the proposal as eliminating the use of race
gender means of obtaining DBE
participation through the elimination of
this one example. One commenter
questioned the impact this change
would have in those States where DBE
contract goals are not established
because the overall goal can be met
through race-neutral means alone.

Another commenter mistakenly thought
the proposed change would not allow
DBE participation that exceeds a
contract goal to be considered race-
neutral participation as currently
provided in Federal Guidance.

Supporters of the proposal agreed with
the explanation provided by the
Department.

DOT Response: The Department
believes that most of the opposition to
this proposal stems from a
misunderstanding of what the
Department intended to change. The
NPRM was to remove the proposed example
only for contracts that had a DBE goal,
not for contracts that were race-neutral.
The Department did not propose
nor is finalizing removing the other two
elements of race-neutral DBE
participation or to remove the third
element for race-neutral contracts.
The Department understands how the
preamble to the NPRM could have led
to this confusion, as it was not explicit.
Certainly, had the Department proposed
to remove, as an example of race-neutral
participation, the “selection of a DBE
subcontractor by a prime contractor that
did not consider the DBE’s status in
making the award” in contracts that had
no DBE goals, the Department would
have, effectively, been eliminating the
very concept of race-neutral
participation.

Thus, instead of the drastic change
that concerned many commenters, the
revised final rule simply removes as an
example of race-neutral DBE
participation in contracts that have DBE
goals the use of a strict low bid system
to award subcontracts. The Department
continues to believe that it is difficult
for recipients to determine if a prime
contractor uses a strict low bid system
and that use of such a system when
contract goals are set runs counter to the
Department’s good faith effort guidance
in Appendix A.

However, this final rule does not
mean DBE participation obtained in
excess of a contract goal may never be
considered race-neutral DBE
participation. When DBE participation
is obtained as a prime contractor
through customary competitive procurement procedures, is obtained as a subcontractor on a contract without a DBE goal, or is obtained in excess of a contract or project goal, the use of a DBE under those circumstances properly may be characterized as race-neutral DBE participation. This revision to our rule does not represent a policy shift from the existing requirement that recipients meet the maximum feasible portion of the overall goal through the use of race-neutral means of facilitating DBE participation. Indeed, if a recipient is able to meet its overall DBE participation goal without using race-conscious measures (i.e., setting contract goals), the recipient is obligated to do so under the existing regulations. The revision to 49 CFR 26.51(a) does not change that requirement.

**Good Faith Efforts To Meet Contract Goals 49 CFR 26.53**

**Responsiveness vs. Responsibility**

The NPRM proposed eliminating the “responsiveness vs. responsibility” distinction for when good faith efforts (GFE) documentation, which includes specific information about DBE participation, must be submitted on solicitations with DBE contract goals. The “responsiveness” approach requires all bidders or offerors to submit the DBE participation information and other GFE documentation required by 49 CFR 26.53(b)(2) at the time of bid submission. By contrast, the “responsibility” approach allows all bidders or offerors to submit the required information at some point before a commitment to perform the contract is made to a particular bidder or offeror (e.g., before contract award). The proposed change to the rule would have removed the current discretion recipients have to choose between the two approaches and require, with one exception, the submission of all information about DBEs that will participate on the contract and the evidence of GFE made to obtain DBE participation on the contract when the bid or offer is presented.

The NPRM also put forward an alternative approach that would allow a short period of time (e.g., 24 hours) after the bid submission deadline during which the apparent successful bidder or offeror would submit its GFE documentation. Under the alternative, the GFE documentation would have to relate to the pre-bid submission efforts; no post-bid efforts would be acceptable. The Department also asked for comment as to whether the one-day period should be extended to three days.

The exception to the across-the-board responsiveness approach or the alternative approach (all of which apply to sealed bid procurements) would be in a negotiated procurement, where in the initial submission the bidders or offerors may make a contractually binding commitment to meet the DBE contract goal and provide specific DBE information and GFE documentation before final selection for the contract is made. Negotiated procurement would include alternate procurement practices such as Design Build procurements in which it is not always possible to commit to specific DBEs at the time of bid submission or contract award.

The Department received many comments on this proposal. The majority of the responses opposing the revisions were submitted by prime contractors, prime contractor associations and some State departments of transportation. Over one hundred form letters of opposition from contractors were received. Those opposing the revision cited the nature of the construction industry and recipient procurement processes as a main reason for opposition. The majority of these comments concentrated on the administrative burden of providing GFE documentation that includes DBE commitments at the time of bid. Commenters stated that because of the nature of bidding on construction contracts, such as hectic timeframes, fixed deadlines, and electronic bidding forms, it was not possible to submit DBE commitments and other GFE documentation at the very last minute of bid. Other reasons given for disapproval included the belief that the proposed rule would limit the use of DBEs on contracts, and it would be difficult for DBEs to negotiate with multiple bidders as opposed to only the identified lowest bidder. In addition, some commenters believed it would not be possible to implement the “responsiveness” approach on “design build projects” because the design and scope of work for the project is not known at the time of bid.

The Department received comments in favor of the proposal, primarily from minority and women advocacy organizations, regional transit authorities, and some State departments of transportation that already required DBE documentation as a matter of responsiveness. Those in support of the revision primarily stated that the current practice of allowing each recipient to decide whether DBE information should be collected as a matter of responsiveness or responsibility has led to abuses of the DBE program, such as facilitating “bid shopping” practices. A member of Congress supported this proposal stating that the current practice of allowing each recipient to decide whether DBE information should be collected as a matter of responsiveness or responsibility has led to abuses of the DBE program, without more specifics. There were alternatives suggested by some organizations. Most of the suggestions could be grouped into three general categories: (1) Leave the “responsiveness/responsibility” distinction as is; (2) allow a short time frame for GFE documentation that includes DBE information to be submitted (1–3 days); and (3) allow a longer time frame for that information to be submitted (3–14 days). Many who opposed eliminating the “responsive/responsibility” distinction had less opposition if good faith efforts documentation could be submitted by the apparent low bidder sometime after bid submission. Most opponents expressed a need for a longer timeframe to review the quotes. In addition, many contractor organizations overwhelmingly stated that the good faith efforts documentation should only be submitted by the apparent successful bidder. There were additional comments that opposed the proposal, but they did not offer any suggestions for a different timeframe.

After the Department reopened the comment period in September 2013 and convened a listening session on December 5, 2013, to hear directly from stakeholders about the specific costs and benefits of this proposed regulatory change, general contractors overwhelmingly continued to express strong opposition to the proposal. According to the contractors, the problems presented by the proposal include, among others: (1) A failure of the Department to understand the complexities and challenges of the bidding process; (2) increased burdens placed on the limited resources available to DBEs to develop multiple quotes and engage in time-consuming negotiations before bids are due; (3) an adverse impact on the willingness of general contractors to consider new, unfamiliar DBEs because of limited vetting time; (4) increased risk to prime contractors from incomplete or inaccurate DBE quotes likely to result in less DBE participation; (5) a reduction in, or elimination of, second tier subcontracting opportunities for DBEs; and (6) a deterrent to the use of DBEs in creative methods due to concerns about disclosure of confidential, proprietary information. Moreover, the American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) and the...
Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) challenged the claim of “bid shopping” as the basis for the proposed change, demanding a full explanation of the problem (if it exists) and the data relied upon to justify the proposal.

Based on a survey of 300 ARTBA members, 42% of the contractors indicated they would bid on less Federal-aid work if this (and other) proposed change is made permanent; that they would have to increase bid prices to cover additional costs ($25,100–$100,000 per bid); that they would have to add staff; and that the estimated cost of complying annually across the industry is in the range of $25 million–$11 billion. Forty-three percent (43%) of the members indicated that DBE plans (i.e., DBE commitments) currently are required by their State departments of transportation at the time of bid; and 37% currently submit good faith efforts documentation with their bid. The AGC acknowledged that some States currently require listing DBEs at the time of bid, but it asserts that those contacted universally responded that the bidding process is costly, burdensome, and results in lower DBE utilization.

The few State departments of transportation that submitted written comments during the reopened comment period supported allowing recipients the flexibility to permit submission of good faith efforts documentation at least 7–10 days after bids are due. Those with electronic bidding systems associated with modifying those systems to conform to changes in the rules as one more burden straining already limited resources. One State department of transportation supported the proposed change requiring good faith efforts documentation at bid opening.

A few DBEs submitted a form expressing support for the requirement that good faith efforts documentation be submitted with the bid, while others saw the change as creating an unnecessary burden that would tax resources and may result in shutting out DBEs. Before adopting an across-the-board approach, one commenter urged the Department to look carefully at other States that follow the “responsiveness” approach to assess whether it creates opportunities or closes doors. Given prime contractor opposition, the commenter thought there should be some limit to how long after bid opening bidders or offerors are allowed to submit GFE documentation that includes specific DBE information. From the comments, the time period permitted by recipients that use the responsibility approach can run from 3 to 30 days. These comments present timelines similar to those found in a review the Department recently conducted of the DBE Program Plans for all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. The results of this analysis are available in the docket for this rulemaking.

The DOT Response: For years the Department has been concerned about claims of “bid shopping” engaged in by some prime contractors to the detriment of DBE and non-DBE subcontractors, suppliers, truckers, etc. and the adverse impact it has on the principle of fair competition. The meaning and practice of bid shopping is well understood within the construction industry and among public contracting entities. It occurs when a general contractor discloses the bid price of one subcontractor to a competing subcontractor in an attempt to obtain a lower bid than the one on which the general contractor based its bid to the owner. Variations include “reverse auctions” (where the subcontractors compete for the job by lowering prices) and “bid peddling” (subcontractors offering to reduce their bid to induce the contractors to substitute the subcontractor after award).

In 1992, when the Department proposed a similar change in the DBE program regulations, it believed then, as it does now, that requiring the submission of good faith efforts documentation that includes DBE information at the time bids are due (as a matter of responsiveness) is a reasonable means of reducing the bid shopping problem. Contrary to the current claims made by general contractors, the Department’s interest in revisiting this issue represents neither a “startling” change in direction for the DOT Response nor a lack of understanding of the procurement process for transportation construction projects. At the same time, the Department acknowledged later in 1997 and 1999 when we finalized that proposed rulemaking. It does now, that the responsiveness approach may be more difficult administratively for prime contractors and recipients, even though that approach was, and is, being used in some places.

One of the hallmarks of the DBE program is the flexibility afforded recipients to tailor implementation of some aspects of the program to respond to local conditions or circumstances. Indeed, the DBE program regulations cite among the objectives, the desire “to provide appropriate flexibility to recipients of Federal financial assistance in establishing and providing opportunities for DBEs.” 49 CFR 26.1(g). Flexibility is recognized in many ways: For recipients, overall and contract goals are set based on local conditions, taking into account circumstances specific to a particular recipient or a particular contract; and for prime contractors, they cannot be penalized or denied a contract for failing to meet the goal, as long as documented good faith efforts are made. At what point in the procurement process the good faith efforts documentation must be submitted is yet another example of the flexibility that the Department should not undo without more information.

To the extent that bid shopping exists, it works to the detriment of all subcontractors, DBEs and non-DBEs alike, and drives up the cost of projects to the taxpaying public. However, absent sufficient data regarding the impact of each approach on deferring bid shopping and its effects or data on the costs/benefits of each approach when implemented consistent with the rule, as well as the potential burdens argued by those opposed to the change, the Department is not prepared, at this time, to finalize the proposal to adopt an across-the-board approach. Before taking that step, we think it prudent to examine closely the “responsiveness” approach used by many recipients to determine its impact on mitigating bid shopping and on providing greater or lesser opportunities for DBE participation. We intend to undertake such a review which may lead to proposed regulatory action in the future.

While we are retaining the discretion of recipients to choose between a responsiveness or responsibility approach, we think there should be some limit to how long after bid opening bidders or offerors are allowed to submit GFE documentation that includes specific DBE information to reduce the opportunity to bid shop where it exists. This would have the effect of reducing the burden on prime contractors and recipients who use a responsibility approach from the burden allegedly caused by the proposal, while at the same time minimizing opportunities for bid shopping by restricting the amount of time truly needed to gather the necessary information. From the comments, the time period permitted by recipients that use the responsibility approach can run the gamut from 3 to 30 days. These comments present timelines similar to those found in a review the Department recently conducted of the DBE Program Plans for all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.1 The results of this analysis are available in the docket for this rulemaking.2 This analysis shows that: (1) 30 of the State departments of transportation report that they use the responsiveness approach, although the Department notes that some variations on the responsiveness approach—a combination of responsiveness and responsibility—may actually be used by

1 For purposes of this discussion, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia are considered “States.”

2 See DOT Docket ID Number OST–2012–0147.
some of these recipients; (2) 20 State departments of transportation used the responsibility approach; and (3) two State departments of transportation (Puerto Rico and Florida) have completely race-neutral programs and thus do not set DBE contract goals. Of the 20 responsibility States, 17 States have a set period of time bidders or offerors are given to submit the required information, which ranges from 3 to 15 days, while three States have no set time for all contracts. The results of this review are generally consistent with the survey conducted by ARTBA indicating that 43% of the 300 members responding stated that their State departments of transportation required submission of DBE utilization plans with the bid. We note that the term “DBE utilization plan” is not used anywhere in the DBE program regulations.

We think it reasonable ultimately to limit the time to a maximum of 5 calendar days to protect program beneficiaries and overall program integrity. The Department believes 5 calendar days is reasonable because it is more than or equal to the time permitted by five of the responsibility states and, by definition, all of the responsiveness states. Moreover, many of the DOT recipients that commented on establishing a time limit recommended between one (1) to 7 days. Allowing a longer time frame, such as between 7 and 14 days, is too long; it increases opportunities for bid shopping to occur. However, in the final rule we have provided some time for recipients that use this revised responsibility approach to transition to the shorter time frame by January 1, 2017. The transition period is intended to provide time to put in place any necessary system modifications. Until then, recipients will be permitted up to 7 calendar days to require the submission of DBE documentation after bid opening when using a responsibility approach. The Department believes this will allow for a smoother transition to the new approach, while seemingly without encountering the administrative difficulties and added costs pointed to by some of the commenters opposed to the proposed change.

Based on the comments, there is some confusion about how the document requirements of §26.53(b) apply to design-build contracts. It bears repeating what the Department said in 1999 on this subject, because it remains the case today:

On design-build contracts, the normal process for setting contract goals does not fit the contract award process well. At the time of the award of the master contract, neither the recipient nor the master contractor knows in detail what the project will look like or exactly what contracting opportunities there will be, let alone the identity of DBEs who may subsequently be involved. In these situations, the recipient may alter the normal process, setting a project goal to which the master contractor commits. Later, when the master contractor is letting subcontracts, it will set contract goals as appropriate, standing in the shoes of the recipient. The recipient will exercise oversight of this process.

((45 FR 5151). The proposed change would not have applied to design-build contracts.

NAICS Codes

The Department proposed changes to the information to be included with bids or offers by requiring the bidders or offerors to provide the recipient with information showing that each DBE signed up by the bidder or offeror is certified in the NAICS code(s) for the kind of work the DBE will be performing. This proposed change was intended to help bidders or offerors identify firms that can qualify for DBE credit in the work area involved in the contract. This information would be submitted with the bidder’s or offeror’s DBE participation data.

The Department received 26 comments regarding the NAICS codes, 15 against the proposal and nine in favor of it. The comments submitted included State departments of transportation, prime contractors and contractor associations. The opponents of this proposal included mostly prime contractors and contractor associations, and a few State departments of transportation. The opponents’ comments focused on a concern that the legal risk associated with including a DBE who could not perform a commercially useful function would fall on the prime contractor, meaning that the prime contractor could be the subject of investigations and charges brought by the DOT Inspector General and others, when it is the certifying agencies that should bear this responsibility. Other comments indicated that adding NAICS codes would not add any value to the process. The proponents of the proposal included advocacy groups and some State departments of transportation. Proponents believe that the NAICS codes requirement will add clarification to the process and ensure that the recipient can complete the work.

DOT Response: Under existing regulations, DBEs must be certified in the type of work the firm can perform as described by the most specific available NAICS code for that type of work. Certifiers (i.e., recipients or other agencies that perform the certification function) also may apply a descriptor from a classification scheme of equivalent detail and specificity that reflects the goods and services provided by the DBE (49 CFR 26.71(a)). It is the responsibility of the DBE to provide the certifier with the information needed to make an appropriate NAICS code assignment. In the new certification application form, firms are asked to describe their primary activities and the product(s) or service(s) they provide and to list applicable NAICS codes they seek. If the firm enters into new areas of work since it was first certified, it is the firm’s responsibility to provide the certifier the evidence of how they qualify for the new NAICS codes. It is then incumbent upon the certifying agency to determine that the NAICS code to be assigned adequately describes the kind of work the disadvantaged owners have demonstrated they can control and it is the responsibility of the recipient of DOT funds to determine that the DBE’s participation on a particular contract can be counted because the DBE is certified to perform the kind of work to be performed on that contract.

The Department has decided to make final this proposed rule change. In doing so, the Department does not intend to shift responsibility for the accuracy of NAICS code assignments from the certifier to the contractor. When a DBE submits a bid to a recipient as a prime contractor or a quote to a general contractor as a subcontractor, it is the responsibility of the DBE to ensure that the bid or quote shows that the NAICS code in which the DBE is certified corresponds to the work to be performed by the DBE on that contract. Including this information in the bid documents should assist all parties concerned in

3 Under 49 CFR 26.53(c), all GFE documentation must be submitted before committing to the performance of the contract by the bidder or offeror (i.e., before contract award).

4 Due to the definition of “days” adopted in this final rule, bidders or offerors will have 5 calendar days (i.e., not business days) to submit the necessary information. Thus, if a bid is submitted on Thursday, the apparent low bidder would have until Tuesday to submit the information.
complying with DBE program requirements. Thus, it is the responsibility of the certifier to ensure that DBEs are certified only in the appropriate NAICS codes; it is the responsibility of the DBE to provide that NAICS code to the prime while the prime is putting together a bid; and it is the responsibility of the prime to provide those codes to the recipient when providing the other DBE information. It is not the responsibility of the prime to vouch for the accuracy of that certification.

**Replacement of a DBE**

The NPRM proposed that in the event that it is necessary to replace a DBE listed on a contract, a contractor must document the GFE taken to obtain a replacement and may be required to take specific steps to demonstrate GFE. The specific steps would include: (1) A statement of efforts made to negotiate with DBEs for specific work or supplies, including the names, address, telephone numbers, and emails of those DBEs that were contacted; (2) the time and date each DBE was contacted; (3) a description of the information provided to DBEs regarding the plans and specifications for portions of the work to be performed or the materials supplied; and (4) an explanation of why an agreement between the prime contractor and a DBE was not reached. The prime contractor would have to submit this information within 7 days of the recipient’s agreement to permit the original DBE to be replaced, and the recipient must provide a written determination to the contractor stating whether or not good faith efforts have been demonstrated. Failure to comply with the GFE requirements in the rule would constitute a material breach of contract, subject to termination and other remedies provided in the contract.

Forty-eight commenters opposed this modification to the rules. They included prime contractors, State departments of transportation, and contractor associations. Essentially, the opponents were of the view that prime contractors should not be responsible for looking beyond the original commitment for DBE replacements. Others felt that the 7 day timeframe to replace a DBE is not long enough. Some opponents suggested changing the proposal so that it is desirable to replace a DBE with a DBE, but not mandatory. Some prime contractors also stated that there is a need to be compensated for the delays to replace a DBE. Those in favor of the proposal included five commenting State departments of transportation, transit authorities, and DBE advocacy groups. These commenters felt that contractors should make efforts to replace a DBE and failure to carry out the requirement to do so is a breach of contract.

**DOT Response:** When the Department amended the regulations in 2011 (the first phase of its recent focus on program improvements), we required prime contractors that terminate DBEs make GFE to find a replacement to perform at least the same amount of work under the contract to meet the contract goal established for the procurement. Thus, this GFE obligation currently exists and is not new. We agree that the GFE guidance in Appendix A used by recipients to assess the efforts made by bidders and offerors before contract award can also be used to evaluate efforts made by the contractor to replace a DBE after contract award. There is no need to separately identify steps that a recipient may require when a contractor is replacing a DBE. However, there is nothing that prevents a contractor from taking any of the steps included in the proposed amendment to the rules. Indeed, recipients may consider, as part of their evaluation of the efforts made by the contractor, whether DBEs were notified of subcontracting opportunities, whether new items of work were made available for subcontracting, what information was made available to DBEs, and what efforts were made to negotiate with DBEs.

The GFEs made by the contractor to obtain a replacement DBE should be documented and submitted to the recipient within a reasonable time after obtaining approval to terminate an existing DBE. To avoid needless delay and ensure timely action, we think 7 days is reasonable, but we have modified the rule to allow recipients to extend the time if necessary at the request of the contractor.

The existing regulations currently require a contract clause be included in prime contracts and subcontracts that make the failure by the contractor to carry out applicable requirements of 49 CFR Part 26 a material breach of contract, which may result in the termination of the contract or such other remedy as the recipient deems appropriate. See 49 CFR 26.13(b). Consequently, a contractor that fails to comply with the requirements for terminating or replacing a DBE would be in breach of contract, subject to contract sanctions that include termination of the contract. We need not replicate the provisions of § 26.13. We also will not prescribe what the appropriate sanctions or administrative remedies must be. However, we have revised § 26.13 to incorporate the list of remedies we proposed as other possible contract remedies recipients should consider. Many of the suggestions are sanctions currently used by some recipients. They include withholding progress payments, liquidated damages, disqualifying the contractor from future bidding, and assessing monetary penalties.

**Copies of Quotes and Subcontracts**

The Department proposed to require the apparent successful bidder/offeror, as part of its GFE documentation, to provide copies of each DBE and non-DBE subcontractor quote it received in situations where the bidder/offeror selected a non-DBE firm to do work sought by a DBE. This information would help the recipient determine whether there is validity to any claims by a bidder/offeror that a DBE was rejected because its quote was too high. The contractor who is awarded the contract also would be required to submit copies of all DBE subcontracts.

There were 15 organizations that commented on the proposal regarding quotes and 19 commenters on the proposal regarding subcontracts. Commenters were almost evenly divided in their support for, or opposition to, requiring the submission of quotes under the limited circumstances set out in the proposed rule. A State department of transportation noted that the submission of quotes was already being implemented in its program. One supporter suggested this requirement should apply only when the DBE contract goal is not met. Opponents raised concerns about the burden imposed and questioned the benefit to be derived since the comparison of quotes is not viewed as a useful exercise. Regarding the submission of subcontracts, the commenters overwhelmingly opposed making this a requirement because of the burden. One commenter suggested that the proposal appears to duplicate an existing requirement of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and another commenter questioned the steps that would be taken to protect confidential or proprietary information.

**DOT Response:** The GFE guidance in Appendix A, in its current form, instructs prime contractors to consider a number of factors when negotiating with a DBE and states that the fact that there may be some additional costs involved in finding and using DBEs is not in itself sufficient reason for a bidder’s failure to meet the contract DBE goal, as long as such costs are reasonable and the reasonableness of a DBE’s quote as compared to a non-DBE’s quote is often
an issue cited by a prime contractor in selecting a non-DBE over a DBE. The Department believes that requiring a bidder/offeror to provide, as part of the GFE documentation, subcontractor quotes received by the bidder/offeror in those instances where a DBE’s quote was rejected over a non-DBE’s quote will assist recipients in determining the validity of claims made by the bidder/offeror that the DBE’s quote was too high or unreasonable and has therefore decided to finalize this proposal. Further, we stress that only the quote would need to be submitted in these situations, not any additional information and only in instances where a non-DBE was selected over a DBE, thus limiting the burden of this requirement.

The Department recognizes that requiring the submission of DBE subcontracts may pose unnecessary burdens on contractors and recipients. Thus, the Department has decided to modify its proposal to only require that DBE subcontracts be made available to recipients upon request when needed to ensure compliance with the requirements of 49 CFR Part 26.

**Good Faith Efforts Applied to Race-Neutral DBE Participation**

We sought comment on whether some of the good faith efforts provisions of the rule concerning contracts with DBE goals should apply to DBEs on contracts that do not have a DBE goal. For example, the rules that restrict termination of DBEs and that impose good faith efforts obligations to replace DBEs that are dropped from a contract or project would apply regardless of whether the DBE’s participation resulted from race-conscious or race-neutral measures.

Of the 28 commenters that responded to this question, only 3 expressed support and all three supporters were DBEs or organizations representing DBEs. Three commenters also were conflicted, unsure of whether the proposal would result in benefits to DBEs. The general contracting community, many State departments of transportation, and some transit agencies expressed opposition because they believe DBEs should be treated no different than non-DBEs on contracts with no DBE goals (the primary means of obtaining measurable DBE participation through race- and gender-neutral measures), and to do otherwise is to essentially convert what began as race-neutral conduct into race-conscious conduct.

**DOT Response:** The Department agrees with the points raised by the commenters opposing this change (specifically, that no distinction should be made between DBEs and non-DBEs when race-neutral measures are used to obtain participation) and has decided to maintain the status quo. The restrictions on terminating and replacing a DBE selected by a bidder or offeror to meet a contract goal are intended to hold the contractor to the good faith efforts commitment made to win the contract. No comparable commitment is made when DBE contract goals are not set.

**Trucking 49 CFR 26.55(d)**

The Department proposed to change the counting rule for trucking to allow 100% of a DBE’s trucking services to be counted when the DBE uses its own employees as drivers but leases trucks from a non-DBE truck leasing company. This proposed change gives DBEs the same ability as non-DBEs to use their own drivers and supplement their fleets with leased trucks without sacrificing any loss of DBE credit because the trucks may be leased from a non-DBE leasing company. It is consistent with the current prohibition on counting materials, supplies, equipment, etc., obtained from the prime contractor or its affiliates. The Department proposed that if a recipient chooses to count the use of trucks and drivers leased from non-DBEs, or to limit credit to fees and commissions for work done with non-DBE lessees, consistent with the 1999 version of the rule. If a recipient chooses to count the use of trucks and drivers leased from non-DBEs, as provided in the existing rule, the recipient’s choice should be reflected in the recipient’s DBE program plan, which is subject to approval by the cognizant operating administration (OA) to ensure appropriate safeguards are taken by the recipient to prevent fraud. The Department does not contemplate obtaining OA consent on a transaction-by-transaction basis.

The modification to the rule that the Department makes final today simply clarifies that trucks that are leased by a DBE from a non-DBE for use by the DBE’s employees should be treated no differently than other equipment a DBE may lease to conduct its business. The value of the transportation services provided by the DBE would not be adversely impacted by the fact that the equipment used by the DBE’s employees is leased instead of owned. This is consistent with the existing counting rule and with the basic principle that DBE participation should be counted for work performed with a DBE firm’s own forces. The term “employee” is to be given its commonly understood dictionary meaning, and “ownership” includes the purchase of a truck or trucks through conventional financing arrangements.

**Regular Dealer 49 CFR 26.55(e)**

The Department proposed to codify guidance issued in 2011 on how to treat the services provided by a DBE acting as a regular dealer or a transaction expediter/broker for counting purposes (i.e., crediting the work of the DBE to toward the goal). The guidance makes clear that counting decisions involving a DBE acting as a regular dealer are made on a contract-by-contract basis and not based on a general description or designation of a DBE as a regular dealer acting as a regular dealer or a transaction expediter/broker.
The Department also invited an open discussion of the regular dealer concept in light of changes in the way business is conducted. Specifically, we sought comment on: (1) How, if at all, changes in the way business is conducted should result in changes in the way DBE credit is counted in supply situations; (2) what is the appropriate measure of the value added by a DBE that does not play a traditional regular dealer/middleman role in a transaction; and (3) do the policy considerations for the current 60% regular dealer credit actually influence more use of DBEs as contractors that receive 100% credit?

The Department received over 50 comments from prime contractors, DBEs, and recipients, many of which emphasized the need for additional clarification of, or changes to, the terminology used to describe regular dealers, middlemen, transaction expediters, and brokers. The comments were evenly divided over whether the guidance should be codified in the regulations. Those in support agreed that the determination of whether or not a DBE is functioning as a regular dealer as defined in the existing rule should be based on the role performed by the DBE on the contract, which may vary from contract to contract. Those opposed to the contract-by-contract approach, represented mostly, but not exclusively, by prime contractors, argued that the approach reflected in the guidance is burdensome and that once a recipient determines at certification that a DBE is a supplier, a wholesaler, a manufacturer, a transaction expeditor, a middleman, or a broker, the credit allowed under the rules should be applied. To do otherwise creates inconsistency, uncertainty, and exposes the prime and the DBE to risks associated with fraud investigations in this area. It is the responsibility of the certifier, they argue, to ensure that a DBE certified as a supplier, for example (and thereby acting as a regular dealer), is, in fact, a supplier and not a transaction expeditor. Indeed, several commenters expressed the view that certifiers should be allowed to certify a DBE as a “regular dealer.” Followed to its logical conclusion, once certified, how the work to be performed by the DBE is counted would be automatic without regard to what the DBE is actually doing on the contract. Many comments addressed the changing business environment where the best method of delivering supplies ordered from a non-DBE manufacturer may in fact be drop-ship rather than delivery by the DBE regular dealer using its own trucks. One commenter stated that the requirement that a DBE own and operate its own distribution equipment directly conflicts with industry practice and creates a greater burden and challenge to DBEs. Similarly, some maintain the requirement for an inventory or store front is outdated. The way business is conducted today, they argue, services provided by wholesalers or e-Commerce businesses do not require an inventory or a store open to the public. Several commenters indicated that they would be comfortable with the elimination of the distinct categories and only have a single distinction of a goods supplier from a non-DBE manufacturer with a set percentage of dollars that could be counted or only using fees and commissions as the amount that can be counted as done currently for transaction expediters and brokers. To encourage greater use of DBE contractors to meet contract goals, one commenter suggested placing a cap (e.g., no more than 50%) on how much of a contract goal could be met using DBE suppliers.

Moreover, the commenter recognized that the requirement that a DBE own its own trucks. One commenter stated that the requirement is not necessary and (3) do the policy considerations for the current 60% regular dealer credit actually influence more use of DBEs as contractors that receive 100% credit?

The Department eliminated altogether regular dealers and brokers from the rule. Others countered that any proposal to eliminate counting regular dealer participation toward contract goals would severely reduce the pool of ready, willing, and able DBEs given how often the regular dealer credit is used to meet contract goals; such a proposal, they maintain, should result in a corresponding reduction in goals. Other commenters believe that it is important to keep the regular dealer concept and consider increasing the counting percentage due to the value added services they provide. Still others thought a complete overhaul of the regular dealer provisions in the rule is needed to recognize decades of changes in the construction industry, and no modifications to the rule should be made until further analysis is done.

DOT Response: The Department has decided to codify the guidance on the treatment of counting decisions that involve DBEs functioning as regular dealers. This guidance is consistent with the basic counting principles set out in the rule that apply regardless of the kind of work performed by the DBE. Specifically, the counting rules apply to a specific contract in which a DBE participates based on the value of work actually performed by the DBE that involves a commercially useful function on that contract. Throughout 49 CFR 26.55 there are numerous references to a “contract,” “the contract,” or “that contract.” In other words, “counting is by definition a contract-by-contract” determination made by recipients after evaluating the work to be performed by the DBE on a particular contract.

The Department appreciates the thought that went into the varied comments received on the questions we posed and the overall interest in the subject. In the context of this discussion, it is important to reiterate that certification and counting are separate concepts in the DBE rule. This applies regardless of the type of work the DBE is certified to perform. It is also important to note that DBEs must be certified in the most specific NAICS code(s) for the type of work they perform and that there is no regular dealer NAICS code. Regular dealer is a term of art used in the context of the DBE program. That said, the Department believes that more analysis and discussion is needed to make informed policy decisions about appropriate modifications to the regulations governing regular dealers, transaction expediters, and brokers. We think it more appropriate at this point to develop additional guidance to address addressing the concerns rather than promulgate regulatory requirements or restrictions beyond those that currently exist. We will continue the conversation through future stakeholder meetings.

Ethics and Conflicts of Interest

The Department sought comment on whether Part 26 should be amended (or guidance issued) to add provisions concerning ethics and conflicts of interest to help play a constructive role in empowering DBE officials in resisting inappropriate political pressures. At the same time, the Department questioned whether such a provision would be effective and whether the provision could be drafted so as not to be overly detailed. The Department also welcomed suggestions about ethics and conflicts of interest.

Less than 25 commenters elected to address this subject; the significant majority of commenters expressed support for adding ethics and conflict of interest provisions to enable DBE certification officials and others to resist inappropriate pressures. An advocacy group commended the Department for initiating a discussion about ethics. A State transportation department suggested including applicable penalties and offering protection via the Whistleblower Protection Act. An airport sponsor supported adding provisions that clarify the roles of staff who administer the selection process. A State transit authority did not believe that effective guidance could be provided in the rule without being overly detailed and burdensome. Moreover, the commenter recognized
that while adding such provisions would play a constructive role, they would not totally eradicate inappropriate pressure. A State transportation department directed the Department to professional codes of conduct for the fields of law and engineering as examples. An advocacy group and a DBE noted that a code of ethics might provide recipients with a “safety net” when responding to undue pressure. Another State transportation department supports the provision if DOT takes quick action against known abusers of ethics. A DBE commenter recommended a workgroup approach be utilized to prepare draft language.

**DOT Response:** There was general support among the commenters for establishing a code of ethics of some kind to insulate or protect DBE program administrators from undue pressure to take actions inconsistent with the intent and language of the DBE program rules. However, very few of the commenters made suggestions on the details of such a code or on the kind of provisions that might be added to address specific concerns. As indicated in the NPRM, recipients and their staffs are subject to State and local codes of ethics that govern public employees and officials in the performance of their official duties and responsibilities, including the responsibilities they carry out in administering the DBE program as a condition of receiving Federal financial assistance. Of course, grant recipients are subject to the common grant rules which prohibit participating in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by Federal funds if a conflict of interest would be involved. Because we lack sufficient information, at this point, to determine the extent to which widespread problems exist or how best to approach the issue—through regulations or guidance—the Department thinks it best to hold off on adopting ethics rules for the DBE program to supplement existing State and local ethics codes. Instead, the Department may engage stakeholders in a further discussion to aid in identifying appropriate next steps.

**Appendix A—Good Faith Efforts Guidance**

The Department proposed several revisions to Appendix A to Part 26—Guidance Concerning Good Faith Efforts to clarify and reinforce the GFE obligation of bidders/offerees and to provide additional guidance to recipients. We proposed to add more examples of the types of actions recipients might consider when evaluating the bidders/offerees’ GFE to obtain DBE participation. The proposed examples included conducting market research to identify small business contractors and suppliers and establishing flexible timeframes for performance and delivery schedules that encourage and facilitate DBE participation. We reinforced concepts that we have emphasized in communicating with recipients over the years: Namely, that a contractor’s desire to perform work with its own forces is not a basis for not making GFE and rejecting a replacement DBE that submits a reasonable quote; and reviewing the performance of other bidders should be a part of the GFE evaluation. The Department also proposed to add language specifying that the rejection of a DBE simply because it was not the low bidder is not a practice considered to be a good faith effort.

There were 25 comments collected that opposed the suggestion that flexible timeframes and schedules be established to facilitate DBE participation. The comments received were submitted by prime contractors, contractor associations, and State departments of transportation. These organizations stated that a “flexible timeframe” was unrealistic and went against the nature of the construction industry. Other organizations stated the need to further quantify what constitutes an “unreasonable quote” when making GFE to replace a DBE. There were two organizations that supported these provisions. U.S. Representative Judy Chu agreed that there can be no definitive checklist, but suggested that best practices be collected and disseminated to clarify the issue. One State department of transportation agreed that the bidder cannot reject a DBE simply due to price.

In the NPRM, we also proposed in Appendix A that DOT operating administrations may change recipients’ good faith efforts decisions. There were a few comments regarding this proposal, all in opposition. The commenters included a DBE, prime contractor, a State department of transportation, and a contractors association. The prime contractor noted that operating administrations should be involved throughout the good faith efforts review process and not after the recipient has made a decision. There were no comments in support of this proposal. **DOT Response:** It is important to reiterate and reinforce that Appendix A is guidance to be used by recipients in considering the good faith efforts of bidders/offerees. It does not constitute a mandatory exhaustive, or exhaustive checklist. Rather, a good faith efforts evaluation looks at the “quality, quantity, and intensity of the different kinds of efforts that the bidder has made.” The proposed revisions to the guidance made by the Department are based on experience gained since the development of the guidance in 1999 and are intended to incorporate clarifications and additional examples of the different kinds of activities to consider. We have modified the final guidance in keeping with the existing purpose and intent. The guidance also seeks to indicate what reasonably may not be viewed as a demonstration of good faith efforts. In this regard, rejecting a DBE only because it was not the low bidder is not consistent with the longstanding idea that a bidder/offeree should consider a variety of factors when negotiating with a DBE, including the fact that there may be additional costs involved in finding and using DBEs, as currently stated in the existing guidance. Similarly, the inability to find a replacement DBE at the original price is not, without more, sufficient to demonstrate GFE were made to replace the original DBE. As currently stated under the existing guidance, a firm’s price is one of many factors to consider in negotiating in good faith with interested DBEs. The Department has decided to make no change to the current role of the operating administrations with respect to the GFE determinations made by recipients. It is the responsibility of recipients to administer the DBE program consistent with the requirements of 49 CFR Part 26, and it is the responsibility of the operating administrations to oversee recipients’ program administration to ensure compliance through appropriate enforcement action if necessary. Such action includes refusing to approve or provide funding for a contract awarded in violation of 49 CFR 26.53(a). The proposed change may confuse the relative roles and responsibilities of the recipients and the operating administrations and consequently has been removed from the final rule.

**Technical Corrections**

The Department is amending the following provisions in 49 CFR Part 26 to correct technical errors:

1. Section 26.3(a)—Include a reference to the Highway and Transit funds authorized under SAFETEA–LU and MAP–21.
2. Section 26.63(c)(7)—Remove the reference to the DOT/SBA MOU since the MOU has lapsed.
3. Section 26.89(a)—Amend to recognize that the DOT/SBA MOU has lapsed.
Regulatory Analyses and Notices

Executive Orders 12866 and 13563 (Regulatory Planning and Review)

This final rule is not a “significant regulatory action” under section 3(f) of Executive Order 12866, Regulatory Planning and Review, and does not require an assessment of potential costs and benefits under section 6(a)(3) of the Order. It does not create significant cost burdens, does not affect the economy adversely, does not interfere or cause a serious inconsistency with any action or plan of another agency, does not materially alter the impact of entitlements, grants, user fees or loan programs; and does not raise novel legal or policy issues. The final rule is essentially a streamlining of the provisions for implementing an existing program, clarifying existing provisions and improving existing forms. To the extent that clearer certification requirements and improved documentation can forestall DBE fraud, the rule will result in significant savings to State and local governments. This final rule does not contain significant policy-level initiatives, but rather focuses on administrative changes to improve program implementation. The Department notes that several commenters, particularly general contractors and their representatives, argued that the NPRM should have been designated as “significant.” Although the Department continues to believe that the designation of the NPRM was correct based on the intent of this rulemaking, we note that, as discussed above, we have decided to not finalize at this time many of the provisions that those commenters argued were significant changes to the DBE program.

Executive Order 12372 (Intergovernmental Review)

The final rule is a product of a process, going back to 2007, of stakeholder meetings and written comment that generated significant input from State and local officials and agencies involved with the DBE program in transit, highway, and airport programs.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

In compliance with the Regulatory Flexibility Act (Pub. L. 96–354, 5 U.S.C. 601–612), we have evaluated the effects of this final rule on small entities and anticipate that this action will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The underlying DBE rule does deal with small entities: All DBEs are, by definition, small businesses. Also, some FAA and FTA recipients that implement the program are small entities. However, the changes to the rule are primarily technical modifications to existing requirements (e.g., improved forms, refinements of certification provisions) that will have little to no economic impact on program participants. Therefore, the changes will not create significant economic effects on anyone. In compliance with the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601–612), I certify that this rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities.

Executive Order 13132 (Federalism)

A rule has implications for federalism under Executive Order 13132, Federalism, if it has a substantial direct effect on State or local governments and would either preempt State law or impose a substantial direct cost of compliance on them. As noted above, there is no substantial compliance cost imposed on State and local agencies, who will continue to implement the underlying program with administrative improvements proposed in the rule. The proposed rule does not involve preemption of State law. Consequently, we have analyzed this proposed rule under the Order and have determined that it does not have implications for federalism.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The Department has analyzed the environmental impacts of this proposed action pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) and has determined that it is categorically excluded pursuant to DOT Order 5610.1C, Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (44 FR 56420, Oct. 1, 1979). Categorical exclusions are actions identified in an agency’s NEPA implementing procedures that do not normally have a significant impact on the environment and therefore do not require either an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS). See 40 CFR 1508.4. In analyzing the applicability of a categorical exclusion, the agency must also consider whether extraordinary circumstances are present that would warrant the preparation of an EA or EIS. Id. Paragraph 3.c.5 of DOT Order 5610.1C incorporates by reference the categorical exclusions for all DOT Operating Administrations. This action is covered by the categorical exclusion listed in the Federal Highway Administration’s implementing procedures, “[p]rovision of rules, regulations, and directives.” 23 CFR 771.117(c)(20). The purpose of this rulemaking is to make technical improvements to the Department’s DBE program, including modifications to the forms used by program and certification-related changes. While this rule has implications for eligibility for the program—and therefore may change who is eligible for participation in the DBE program—it does not change the underlying programs and projects being carried out with DOT funds. Those programs and projects remain subject to separate environmental review requirements, including review under NEPA. The Department does not anticipate any environmental impacts, and there are no extraordinary circumstances present in connection with this rulemaking.

Paperwork Reduction Act

According to the 1995 amendments to the Paperwork Reduction Act (5 CFR 1320.8(b)(2)(vi)), an agency may not collect or sponsor the collection of information, nor may it impose an information collection requirement, unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. This action contains additional amendments to the existing information collection requirements previously approved under OMB Control Number 2105–0510. As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act, the Department has submitted these information collection amendments to OMB for its review. The Department will announce the finalization of this information collection request in a separate Federal Register notice following OMB approval. The NPRM contained estimates of the burden associated with the additional collection requirements proposed in that document. Various commenters stated that the Department understated the proposed burden for the collections associated with the application form and personal net worth form. As discussed above in the relevant portions of the preamble, the Department is sensitive to those concerns and has revised those collections to minimize what information must be submitted and to simplify other aspects of the forms. For each of these information collections, the title, a description of the entity to which it applies, and an estimate of the annual recordkeeping and periodic reporting burden are set forth below.

1. Application Form

Today’s final rule modifies the application form for the DBE program. In the NPRM, the Department explained that its estimate of 8 total burden hours per applicant to complete its DBE or
ACDBE certification application with supporting documentation was based on discussions the Department has had with DBEs in the past. The comments and the Department’s response to those comments are discussed above in the preamble.

The number of new applications received each year by Unified Certification Program members is difficult to estimate. There is no central repository for DBE certification applications and we predict that the frequency of submissions at times vary according to construction season (high applications when the season is over), the contracting opportunities available in the marketplace, and the number of new transportation-related business formations or expansions. To get some estimate however, the Department contacted recipients during the process of developing the NPRM. The agencies we contacted reported receiving between 1–2 applications per month, 5–10 per month, or on the high end 80–100 per month. There are likely several reasons for the variance. Jurisdictions that are geographically contiguous to other states (such as Maryland) and/or have a high DBE applicant pool may receive a higher number whereas jurisdictions in remote areas of the country with smaller numbers of firms may have lower applicant requests for DBE certification. These rough numbers likely do not include requests for expansion of work categories from existing firms that are already certified.

Frequency: Once during initial DBE or ACDBE certification.  
Estimated Average Burden per Response: 8 hours.

Number of Respondents: 9,000–9,500 applicants each year.
Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 72,000–76,000 hours per year.

2. PNW Form

A small business seeking to participate in the DBE and ACDBE programs must be owned and controlled by a socially and economically disadvantaged individual. When a recipient determines that an individual’s net worth exceeds $1.32 million, the individual’s presumption of economic disadvantage is said to have been conclusively rebutted. In order to make this determination, the current rule requires recipients to obtain a signed and notarized statement of personal net worth from all persons who claim to own and control a firm applying for DBE or ACDBE certification and whose ownership and control are relied upon for the certification. These personal net worth statements must be accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation (e.g., tax returns). The form finalized in this rule would replace use of an SBA form suggested in current regulations.

As discussed above in the preamble, we estimate that compiling information for and filling out this form would take approximately 2 hours, slightly longer than that for the SBA form currently in use. As explained in further detail in the above preamble, the Department has chosen not to finalize its proposal to require a PNW form with each annual affidavit of no change. Thus, the number of respondents who must submit a PNW form is the same as the number of applications.

Frequency: Once during initial DBE certification. For the DBE/ACDBE programs, information regarding the assets and liabilities of individual owners is necessary for recipients of grants from the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Federal Highway Administration, to make responsible decisions concerning an applicant’s economic disadvantage under the rule. All persons who claim to own and control a firm applying for DBE or ACDBE certification and whose ownership and control are relied upon for the certification will complete the form.

Estimated Average Burden per Response: 2 hours.

Number of Respondents: 9,000–9,500 applicants each year.
Estimated Burden: 18,000–19,000 hours per year for applications.

3. Material With Annual Affidavits of No Change

Each year, a certified firm must submit an affidavit of no change. Although the Department proposed that DBE would need to submit various additional documentation with the affidavit (e.g., an updated PNW statement and records of transfers) today’s final rule only requires that the owner and the firm’s (including affiliates) most recent completed IRS tax return, IRS Form 4506 (Request for Copy or Transcript of Tax Return) be submitted with the affidavit. Collection and submission of these items during the annual affidavit is estimated to take approximately 1.5 hours.

Estimated Average Burden per Response: 1.5 hours.

Respondents: The approximately 30,000 certified DBE firms.
Burden: Approximately 45,000 hours per year.

4. Reporting Requirement for Percentages of DBEs in Various Categories

The final rule implements a statutory requirement calling on UCPs to annually report the percentages of white women, minority men, and minority women who control DBE firms. To carry out this requirement, the 52 UCPs would read their existing Directories, noting which firms fell into each of these three categories. The UCPs would then calculate the percentages and email their results to the Department’s Office of Civil Rights. It would take each UCP an estimated 3 hours to comb through their Directories, and another three minutes to calculate the percentages and send an email to DOT.

Estimated Average Burden per Response: 3 hours, 3 minutes.
Respondents: 52.
Burden: Approximately 158.5 hours.

5. Uniform Report of DBE Commitments/Awards and Payments

As part of this rulemaking, the Department is reinstating the information collection entitled, “Uniform Report of DBE Commitments/Awards and Payments,” OMB Control No. 2105–0510, consistent with the changes proposed in this final rule. This collection requires that DOT Form 4630 be submitted once or twice per year by each recipient having an approved DBE program. The report form is collected from recipients by FHWA, FTA, and FAA, and is used to enable DOT to conduct program oversight of recipients’ DBE programs and to identify trends or problem areas in the program. This collection is necessary for the Department to carry out its oversight responsibilities of the DBE program, since it allows the Department to obtain information from the recipients about the DBE participation they obtain in their programs.

In this final rule, the Department modified certain aspects of this collection in response to issues raised by stakeholders: (1) Creating separate forms for routine DBE reporting and for transit vehicle manufacturers (TVMs) and mega projects; (2) amending and clarifying the report’s instructions to better explain how to fill out the forms; and (3) changing the forms to better capture the desired DBE data on a more continuous basis, which should also assist with recipients’ post-award oversight responsibilities.

Frequency: Once or twice per year.
Estimated Average Burden per Response: 5 hours per response.

Number of Respondents: 1,250. The Department estimates that
approximately 550 of these respondents prepare two reports per year, while
approximately 700 prepare one report per year.

Estimated Burden: 9,000 hours.

List of Subjects in 49 CFR Part 26
Administrative practice and procedure, Airports, Civil Rights,
Government contracts, Grant-
programs—transportation; Mass transportation, Minority Businesses,
Reporting and recordkeeping
requirements.

Issued this 19th day of September 2014, at
Washington, DC.

Anthony R. Foxx,
Secretary of Transportation.

For the reasons set forth in the
preamble, the Department of
Transportation amends 49 CFR part 26
as follows:

PART 26—PARTICIPATION BY
DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS
ENTERPRISES IN DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION FINANCIAL
ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

§ 26.1 What are the objectives of this part?

1. The authority citation for part 26
continues to read as follows:

Authority: 23 U.S.C. 304 and 324; 49
47123; Section 1101(b) and divisions A and
B of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the
21st Century Act (MAP–21), Pub. L. 112–141,

2. In § 26.1, redesignate paragraphs (f)
and (g) as paragraphs (g) and (h), and
add new paragraph (f) to read as
follows:

§ 26.1 What are the objectives of this part?

(f) To promote the use of DBEs in all
types of federally-assisted contracts and
procurement activities conducted by
recipients.

§ 26.5 What do the terms used in this part
mean?

Assets mean all the property of a
person available for paying debts or for
distribution, including one’s respective
share of jointly held assets. This
includes, but is not limited to, cash on
hand and in banks, savings accounts,
IRA or other retirement accounts,
accounts receivable, life insurance,
stocks and bonds, real estate, and
personal property.

Business, business concern or
business enterprise means an entity
organized for profit with a place of
business located in the United States,
which operates primarily within the
United States or which makes a
significant contribution to the United
States economy through payment of
taxes or use of American products,
materials, or labor.

Contingent Liability means a liability
that depends on the occurrence of a
future and uncertain event. This
includes, but is not limited to, guaranty
for debts owed by the applicant
concern, legal claims and judgments,
and provisions for federal income tax.

Days mean calendar days. In
computing any period of time described
in this part, the day from which the
period begins to run is not counted, and
when the last day of the period is a
Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday,
the period extends to the next day that
is not a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal
holiday. Similarly, in circumstances
where the recipient’s offices are closed
for all or part of the last day, the period
extends to the next day on which the
agency is open.

Immediate family member means
father, mother, husband, wife, son,
daughter, brother, sister, grandfather,
grandmother, father-in-law, mother-in-
law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, and
domestic partner and civil unions
recognized under State law.

Liabilities mean financial or
pecuniary obligations. This includes,
but is not limited to, accounts payable,
notes payable to bank or others,
installment accounts, mortgages on real
estate, and unpaid taxes.

Primary industry classification means
the most current North American
Industry Classification System (NAICS)
designation which best describes the
primary business of a firm. The NAICS
is described in the North American
Industry Classification Manual—United
States, which is available on the Internet
at the U.S. Census Bureau Web site:
http://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/.

Principal place of business means the
business location where the individuals
who manage the firm’s day-to-day
operations spend most working hours.
If the offices from which management
is directed and where the business records
are kept are in different locations, the
recipient will determine the principal
place of business.

Socially and economically
disadvantaged individual means any
individual who is a citizen (or lawfully
admitted permanent resident) of the
United States and who has been
subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or
cultural bias within American society
because of his or her identity as a
member of groups and without regard
to his or her individual qualities. The
social disadvantage must stem from
circumstances beyond the individual’s
control.

(1) Any individual who a recipient
finds to be a socially and economically
disadvantaged individual on a case-by-
case basis. An individual must
demonstrate that he or she has held
himself or herself out, as a member of
a designated group if you require it.

(2) Any individual in the following
groups, members of which are
rebuttably presumed to be socially and
financially disadvantaged:
(i) “Black Americans,” which includes persons having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa;
(ii) “Hispanic Americans,” which includes persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Central or South American, or other Spanish or Portuguese culture or origin, regardless of race;
(iii) “Native Americans,” which includes persons who are enrolled members of a federally or State recognized Indian tribe, Alaska Natives, or Native Hawaiians;
(iv) “Asian-Pacific Americans,” which includes persons whose origins are from Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea, Burma (Myanmar), Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia (Kampuchea), Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei, Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands (Republic of Palau), Republic of the Northern Mariana Islands, Samoa, Macao, Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru, Federated States of Micronesia, or Hong Kong;
(v) “Subcontinent Asian Americans,” which includes persons whose origins are from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives Islands, Nepal or Sri Lanka;
(vi) Women;
(vii) Any additional groups whose members are designated as socially and economically disadvantaged by the SBA, at such time as the SBA designation becomes effective.

(3) Being born in a particular country does not, standing alone, mean that a person is necessarily a member of one of the groups listed in this definition.

Spouse means a married person, including a person in a domestic partnership or a civil union recognized under State law.

Transit vehicle manufacturer means any manufacturer whose primary business purpose is to manufacture vehicles specifically built for public mass transportation. Such vehicles include, but are not limited to: Buses, rail cars, trolleys, ferries, and vehicles manufactured specifically for paratransit purposes. Producers of vehicles that receive post-production alterations or retrofitting to be used for public transportation purposes (e.g., so-called cutaway vehicles, vans customized for service to people with disabilities) are also considered transit vehicle manufacturers. Businesses that manufacture, mass-produce, or distribute vehicles solely for personal use and for sale “off the lot” are not considered transit vehicle manufacturers.

5. In § 26.11, add paragraphs (d) and (e) to read as follows:

### § 26.11 What records do recipients keep and report?

* * * * *

(d) You must maintain records documenting a firm’s compliance with the requirements of this part. At a minimum, you must keep a complete application package for each certified firm and all affidavits of no-change, change notices, and on-site reviews. These records must be retained in accordance with applicable record retention requirements for the recipient’s financial assistance agreement. Other certification or compliance related records must be retained for a minimum of three (3) years unless otherwise provided by applicable record retention requirements for the recipient’s financial assistance agreement, whichever is longer.

(e) The State department of transportation in each UCP established pursuant to § 26.81 of this part must report to the Department of Transportation’s Office of Civil Rights, by January 1, 2015, and each year thereafter, the percentage and location in the State of certified DBE firms in the UCP Directory controlled by the following:

1. Women;
2. Socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (other than women); and
3. Individuals who are women and are otherwise socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

6. Revise § 26.13, to read as follows:

### § 26.13 What assurances must recipients and contractors make?

(a) Each financial assistance agreement you sign with a DOT-operating administration (or a primary recipient) must include the following assurance: The recipient shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex in the award and performance of any DOT-assisted contract or in the administration of its DBE program or the requirements 49 CFR part 26. The recipient shall take all necessary and reasonable steps under 49 CFR part 26 to ensure nondiscrimination in the award and administration of DOT-assisted contracts. The recipient’s DBE program, as required by 49 CFR part 26 and as approved by DOT, is incorporated by reference in this agreement. Implementation of this program is a legal obligation and failure to carry out its terms shall be treated as a violation of this agreement. Upon notification to the recipient of its failure to carry out its approved program, the Department may impose sanctions as provided for under 49 CFR part 26 and may, in appropriate cases, refer the matter for enforcement under 18 U.S.C. 1001 and/or the Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act of 1986 (31 U.S.C. 3801 et seq.).

(b) Each contract you sign with a contractor (and each subcontract the prime contractor signs with a subcontractor) must include the following assurance: The contractor, sub recipient or subcontractor shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex in the performance of this contract. The contractor shall carry out applicable requirements of 49 CFR part 26 in the award and administration of DOT-assisted contracts. Failure by the contractor to carry out these requirements is a material breach of this contract, which may result in the termination of this contract or such other remedy as the recipient deems appropriate, which may include, but is not limited to:

1. Withholding monthly progress payments;
2. Assessing sanctions;
3. Liquidated damages; and/or
4. Disqualifying the contractor from future bidding as non-responsible.

### § 26.21 [Amended]

7. In § 26.21, paragraph (a)(1) add the word “primary” before the word “recipients”, and in paragraphs (a)(2) and (3), remove the word “exceeding” and add in its place the words “the cumulative total value of which exceeds”.

8. In § 26.45, revise paragraphs (c)(2), (c)(5); (d) introductory text, (e)(3), (f)(4), and (g) to read as follows:

### § 26.45. How do recipients set overall goals?

* * * * *

(2) Use a bidders list. Determine the number of DBEs that have bid or quoted (successful and unsuccessful) on your DOT-assisted prime contracts or subcontracts in the past three years. Determine the number of all businesses that have bid or quoted (successful and unsuccessful) on prime or subcontracts in the same time period. Divide the number of DBE bidders and quoters by the number of all businesses to derive a base figure for the relative availability of DBEs in your market. When using this approach, you must establish a mechanism (documented in your goal submission) to directly capture data on DBE and non-DBE prime and
subcontractors that submitted bids or quotes on your DOT-assisted contracts.

(5) Alternative methods. Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph, you may use other methods to determine a base figure for your overall goal. Any methodology you choose must be based on demonstrable evidence of local market conditions and be designed to ultimately attain a goal that is rationally related to the relative availability of DBEs in your market. The exclusive use of a list of prequalified contractors or plan holders, or a bidders list that does not comply with the requirements of paragraph (c)(2) of this section, is not an acceptable alternative method of determining the availability of DBEs.

(d) Step 2. Once you have calculated a base figure, you must examine all of the evidence available in your jurisdiction to determine what adjustment, if any, is needed to the base figure to arrive at your overall goal. If the evidence does not suggest an adjustment is necessary, then no adjustment shall be made.

(e) * * * * *

In appropriate cases, the FHWA, FTA or FAA Administrator may permit or require you to express your overall goal as a percentage of funds for a particular grant or project or group of grants and/or projects, including entire projects. Like other overall goals, a project goal may be adjusted to reflect changed circumstances, with the concurrence of the appropriate operating administration.

(i) A project goal is an overall goal, and must meet all the substantive and procedural requirements of this section pertaining to overall goals.

(ii) A published notice announcing your proposed overall goal before submission to the operating administration on August 1st. The notice must be posted on your official Internet Web site and may be posted in any other sources (e.g., minority-focused media, trade association publications). If the proposed goal changes following review by the operating administration, the revised goal must be posted on your official Internet Web site.

(ii) At your discretion, you may inform the public that the proposed overall goal and its rationale are available for inspection during normal business hours at your principal office and for a 30-day comment period. Notice of the comment period must include addresses to which comments may be sent. The public comment period will not extend the August 1st deadline set in paragraph (f) of this section.

§ 26.49 How are overall goals established for transit vehicle manufacturers?

(a) If you are an FTA recipient, you must require in your DBE program that each transit vehicle manufacturer, as a condition of being authorized to bid or propose on FTA-assisted transit vehicle procurements, certify that it has complied with the requirements of this section. You do not include FTA assistance used in transit vehicle procurements in the base amount from which your overall goal is calculated.

(1) Only those transit vehicle manufacturers listed on FTA’s certified list of Transit Vehicle Manufacturers, or that have submitted a goal methodology to FTA that has been approved or has not been disapproved, at the time of solicitation are eligible to bid.

(2) A TVM’s failure to implement the DBE Program in the manner as prescribed in this section and throughout 49 CFR part 26 will be deemed as non-compliance, which will result in removal from FTA’s certified TVMs list, resulting in that manufacturer becoming ineligible to bid.

(3) FTA recipient’s failure to comply with the requirements set forth in paragraph (a) of this section may result in formal enforcement action or appropriate sanction as determined by FTA (e.g., FTA declining to participate in the vehicle procurement).

(4) FTA recipients are required to submit within 30 days of making an award, the name of the successful bidder, and the total dollar value of the contract in the manner prescribed in the grant agreement.

(b) If you are a transit vehicle manufacturer, you must establish and submit for FTA’s approval an annual overall percentage goal.

(1) In setting your overall goal, you should be guided, to the extent applicable, by the principles underlying § 26.45. The base from which you calculate this goal is the amount of FTA financial assistance included in transit vehicle contracts you will bid on during the fiscal year in question, less the portion(s) attributable to the manufacturing process performed entirely by the transit vehicle manufacturer’s own forces.

(i) You must consider and include in your base figure all domestic contracting opportunities made available to non-DBE firms; and

(ii) You must exclude from this base figure funds attributable to work performed outside the United States and its territories, possessions, and commonwealths.

(2) At your discretion, you may inform the public that the proposed overall goal and its rationale are available for inspection during normal business hours at your principal office and for a 30-day comment period. Notice of the comment period must include addresses to which comments may be sent. The public comment period will not extend the August 1st deadline set in paragraph (f) of this section.
provide for public participation. This includes consultation with interested parties consistent with §26.45(g).

(2) The requirements of this part with respect to submission and approval of overall goals apply to you as they do to recipients.

(c) Transit vehicle manufacturers awarded must comply with the reporting requirements of §26.11 of this part including the requirement to submit the Uniform Report of Awards or Commitments and Payments, in order to remain eligible to bid on FTA assisted transit vehicle procurements.

(d) Transit vehicle manufacturers must implement all other applicable requirements of this part, except those relating to UCPs and DBE certification procedures.

(e) If you are an FHWA or FAA recipient, you may, with FHWA or FAA approval, use the procedures of this section with respect to procurements of vehicles or specialized equipment. If you choose to do so, then the manufacturers of this equipment must meet the same requirements (including goal approval by FHWA or FAA) as transit vehicle manufacturers must meet in FTA-assisted procurements.

(f) As a recipient you may, with FTA approval, establish project-specific goals for DBE participation in the procurement of transit vehicles in lieu of complying through the procedures of this section.

10. In §26.51, revise paragraph (a) to read as follows:

§26.51 What means do recipients use to meet overall goals?

(a) You must meet the maximum feasible portion of your overall goal by using race-neutral means of facilitating race-neutral DBE participation. Race-neutral DBE participation includes any time a DBE wins a prime contract through customary competitive procurement procedures or is awarded a subcontract on a prime contract that does not carry a DBE contract goal.

11. In §26.53, revise paragraph (b), redesignate paragraph (f)(1) as (f)(1)(i) and add paragraph (f)(1)(ii), revise paragraphs (g) and (h), and add paragraph (j) to read as follows:

§26.53 What are the good faith efforts procedures recipients follow in situations where there are contract goals?

(b) In your solicitations for DOT-assisted contracts for which a contract goal has been established, you must require the following:

(1) Award of the contract will be conditioned on meeting the requirements of this section;
(2) All bidders or offerors will be required to submit the following information to the recipient, at the time provided in paragraph (b)(3) of this section:
   (i) The names and addresses of DBE firms that will participate in the contract;
   (ii) A description of the work that each DBE will perform. To count toward meeting a goal, each DBE firm must be certified in a NAICS code applicable to the kind of work the firm would perform on the contract;
   (iii) The dollar amount of the participation of each DBE firm participating;
   (iv) Written documentation of the bidder/offeror's commitment to use a DBE subcontractor whose participation it submits to meet a contract goal; and
   (v) Written confirmation from each listed DBE firm that it is participating in the contract in the kind and amount of work provided in the prime contractor's commitment.

(ii) Provided that, in a negotiated procurement, including a design-build procurement, the bidder/offeror may make a contractually binding commitment to meet the goal at the time of bid submission or the presentation of initial proposals but provide the information required by paragraph (b)(2) of this section before the final selection for the contract is made by the recipient.

(ii) You must include in each prime contract a provision stating:
   (A) That the contractor shall utilize the specific DBEs you have designated to perform the work and supply the materials for which each is listed unless the contractor obtains your written consent as provided in this paragraph (f); and
   (B) That, unless your consent is provided under this paragraph (f), the contractor shall not be entitled to any payment for work or material unless it is performed or supplied by the listed DBE.

§26.55 How is DBE participation counted toward goals?

(d) The DBE may also lease trucks from a non-DBE firm, including from an owner-operator. The DBE that leases
trucks equipped with drivers from a non-DBE is entitled to credit for the total value of transportation services provided by non-DBE leased trucks equipped with drivers not to exceed the value of transportation services on the contract provided by DBE-owned trucks or leased trucks with DBE employee drivers. Additional participation by non-DBE owned trucks equipped with drivers receives credit only for the fee or commission it receives as a result of the lease arrangement. If a recipient chooses this approach, it must obtain written consent from the appropriate DOT operating administration.

Example to paragraph (d)(5): DBE Firm X uses two of its own trucks on a contract. It leases two of its own from DBE Firm Y and six trucks equipped with drivers from non-DBE Firm Z. DBE credit would be awarded for the total value of transportation services provided by Firm X and Firm Y, and may also be awarded for the total value of transportation services provided by four of the six trucks provided by Firm Z. In all, full credit would be allowed for the participation of eight trucks. DBE credit could be awarded only for the fees or commissions pertaining to the remaining trucks Firm X receives as a result of the lease with Firm Z.

(6) The DBE may lease trucks without drivers from a non-DBE truck leasing company. If the DBE leases trucks from a non-DBE truck leasing company and uses its own employees as drivers, it is entitled to credit for the total value of these hauling services.

Example to paragraph (d)(6): DBE Firm X uses two of its own trucks on a contract. It leases two additional trucks from non-DBE Firm Z. Firm X uses its own employees to drive the trucks leased from Firm Z. DBE credit would be awarded for the total value of the transportation services provided by all four trucks.

§ 26.67 What rules determine social and economic disadvantage?

(a) Presumption of disadvantage. (1) You must rebuttably presume that citizens of the United States (or lawfully admitted permanent residents) who are women, Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian-Pacific Americans, Subcontinent Asian Americans, or other minorities found to be disadvantaged by the SBA, are socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. You must require applicants to submit a signed, notarized certification that each presumptively disadvantaged owner is, in fact, socially and economically disadvantaged.

(b) Rebuttal of presumption of disadvantage. (1) An individual’s presumption of economic disadvantage may be rebutted in two ways.

(i) If the statement of personal net worth and supporting documentation that an individual submits under paragraph (a)(2) of this section shows that the individual’s personal net worth exceeds $1.32 million, the individual’s presumption of economic disadvantage is rebutted. You are not required to have a proceeding under paragraph (b)(2) of this section in order to rebut the presumption of economic disadvantage in this case.

(ii)(A) If the statement of personal net worth and supporting documentation that an individual submits under paragraph (a)(2) of this section
demonstrates that the individual is able to accumulate substantial wealth, the individual’s presumption of economic disadvantage is rebutted. In making this determination, as a certifying agency, you may consider factors that include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Whether the average adjusted gross income of the owner over the most recent three year period exceeds $350,000;
2. Whether the income was unusual and not likely to occur in the future;
3. Whether the earnings were offset by losses;
4. Whether the income was reinvested in the firm or used to pay taxes arising in the normal course of operations by the firm;
5. Other evidence that income is not indicative of lack of economic disadvantage; and
6. Whether the total fair market value of the owner’s assets exceed $6 million.

You must have a proceeding under paragraph (c)(2) of this section in order to rebut the presumption of economic disadvantage in this case.

In such a proceeding, you have the burden of demonstrating, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the individual is not socially and economically disadvantaged. You may require the individual to produce information relevant to the determination of his or her disadvantage.

When an individual’s presumption of social and/or economic disadvantage has been rebutted, his or her ownership and control of the firm in question cannot be used for purposes of DBE eligibility under this subpart unless and until he or she makes an individual showing of social and/or economic disadvantage. If the basis for rebutting the presumption is a determination that the individual’s personal net worth exceeds $1.32 million, the individual is no longer eligible for participation in the program and cannot regain eligibility by making an individual showing of disadvantage. If the basis for rebutting the presumption is the individual’s ownership of any assets which that individual has transferred to an immediate family member, to a trust, a beneficiary of which is an immediate family member, or to the applicant firm for less than fair market value, within two years prior to a concern’s application for participation in the DBE program or within two years of recipient’s review of the firm’s annual affidavit, unless the individual claiming disadvantaged status can demonstrate that the transfer is to or on behalf of an immediate family member for that individual’s education, medical expenses, or some other form of essential support.

Recipients must not attribute to a individual claiming disadvantaged status any assets transferred by that individual to an immediate family member that are consistent with the customary recognition of special occasions, such as birthdays, graduations, anniversaries, and retirements.

* * * * *

(c)(1) The firm’s ownership by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, including their contribution of capital or expertise to acquire their ownership interests, must be real, substantial, and continuing, going beyond pro forma ownership of the firm as reflected in ownership documents. Proof of contribution of capital should be submitted at the time of the application. When the contribution of capital is through a loan, there must be documentation of the value of assets used as collateral for the loan.

(2) Insufficient contributions include a promise to contribute capital, an unsecured note payable to the firm or an owner who is not a disadvantaged individual, mere participation in a firm’s activities as an employee, or capitalization not commensurate with the value of the firm.

(3) The disadvantaged owners must enjoy the customary incidents of ownership, and share in the risks and be entitled to the profits and losses commensurate with their ownership interests, as demonstrated by the substance, not merely the form, of arrangements. Any terms or practices that give a non-disadvantaged individual or firm a priority or superior right to a firm’s profits, compared to the disadvantaged owner(s), are grounds for denial.

(4) Debt instruments from financial institutions or other organizations that lend funds in the normal course of their business do not render a firm ineligible, even if the debtor’s ownership interest is security for the loan.

Examples to paragraph (c): (i) An individual pays $100 to acquire a majority interest in a firm worth $1 million. The individual’s contribution to capital would not be viewed as substantial.
(ii) A 51% disadvantaged owner and a non-disadvantaged 49% owner contribute $100 and $10,000, respectively, to acquire a firm grossing $1 million. This may be indicative of a pro forma arrangement that does not meet the requirements of (c)(1).
(iii) The disadvantaged owner of a DBE applicant firm spends $250 to file articles of incorporation and obtains a $100,000 loan, but makes only nominal or sporadic payments to repay the loan. This type of contribution is not of a continuing nature.

§ 26.69 What rules govern determinations of ownership?

(a) In determining whether the socially and economically disadvantaged participants in a firm own the firm, you must consider all the facts in the record viewed as a whole, including the origin of all assets and how and when they were used in obtaining the firm. All transactions for the establishment and ownership (or transfer of ownership) must be in the normal course of business, reflecting commercial and arms-length practices.

(b) In determining whether the socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, including their contribution of capital or expertise to acquire their ownership interests, must be real, substantial, and continuing, going beyond pro forma ownership of the firm as reflected in ownership documents. Proof of contribution of capital should be submitted at the time of the application. When the contribution of capital is through a loan, there must be documentation of the value of assets used as collateral for the loan.

16. In § 26.71, revise paragraphs (e) and (l) to read as follows:

§ 26.71 What rules govern determinations concerning control?
[e] Individuals who are not socially and economically disadvantaged or immediate family members may be involved in a DBE firm as owners, managers, employees, stockholders, officers, and/or directors. Such individuals must not, however possess or exercise the power to control the firm, or be disproportionately responsible for the operation of the firm.

(i) Where a firm was formerly owned and/or controlled by a non-disadvantaged individual (whether or not an immediate family member), ownership and/or control were transferred to a socially and economically disadvantaged individual, and the non-disadvantaged individual remains involved with the firm in any capacity, there is a rebuttable presumption of control by the non-disadvantaged individual unless the disadvantaged individual now owning the firm demonstrates to you, by clear and convincing evidence, that:

1. The transfer of ownership and/or control to the disadvantaged individual was made for reasons other than obtaining certification as a DBE; and

2. The disadvantaged individual actually controls the management, policy, and operations of the firm, notwithstanding the continuing participation of a non-disadvantaged individual who formerly owned and/or controlled the firm.

§ 26.73 [Amended]

17. In § 26.73, in paragraph (g), remove the words “unless the recipient requires all firms that participate in its contracts and subcontracts to be prequalified” and in paragraph (h), remove “26.35” and add in its place “26.65”.

18. In § 26.83, revise paragraphs (c), (h), (i), to read as follows:

§ 26.83 What procedures do recipients follow in making certification decisions?

(c) (1) You must take all the following steps in determining whether a DBE firm meets the standards of subpart D of this part:

(i) Perform an on-site visit to the firm’s principal place of business. You must interview the principal officers and review their résumés and/or work histories. You may interview key personnel of the firm if necessary. You must also perform an on-site visit to job sites if there are such sites on which the firm is working at the time of the eligibility investigation in your jurisdiction or local area. You may rely upon the site visit report of any other recipient with respect to a firm applying for certification;

(ii) Analyze documentation related to the legal structure, ownership, and control of the applicant firm. This includes, but is not limited to, Articles of Incorporation/Organization; corporate by-laws or operating agreements; organizational, annual and board/member meeting records; stock ledgers and certificates; and State-issued Certificates of Good Standing

(iii) Analyze the bonding and financial capacity of the firm; lease and loan agreements; bank account signature cards;

(iv) Determine the work history of the firm, including contracts it has received, work it has completed; and payroll records;

(v) Obtain a statement from the firm of the type of work it prefers to perform as part of the DBE program and its preferred locations for performing the work, if any.

(vi) Obtain or compile a list of the equipment owned by or available to the firm and the licenses the firm and its key personnel possess to perform the work it seeks to do as part of the DBE program;

(vii) Obtain complete Federal income tax returns (or requests for extensions) filed by the firm, its affiliates, and the socially and economically disadvantaged owners for the last 3 years. A complete return includes all forms, schedules, and statements filed with the Internal Revenue Service.

(viii) Require potential DBEs to complete and submit an appropriate application form, except as otherwise provided in § 26.85 of this part.

(2) You must use the application form provided in Appendix F to this part without change or revision. However, you may provide in your DBE program, with the written approval of the concerned operating administration, for supplementing the form by requesting specified additional information not inconsistent with this part.

(3) You must make sure that the applicant attests to the accuracy and truthfulness of the information on the application form. This shall be done either in the form of an affidavit sworn to by the applicant before a person who is authorized by State law to administer oaths or in the form of an unsworn declaration executed under penalty of perjury of the laws of the United States. This affidavit must affirm that there have been no changes in the firm’s circumstances affecting its ability to meet size, disadvantaged status, ownership, or control requirements of this part or any material changes in the information provided in its application form, except for changes about which you have notified the recipient under paragraph (i) of this section. The affidavit shall specifically affirm that your firm continues to meet SBA business size criteria and the overall gross receipts cap of this part, documenting this affirmation with supporting documentation of your firm’s size and gross receipts (e.g., submission of Federal tax returns). If you fail to provide this affidavit in a timely manner, you will be deemed to have failed to cooperate under § 26.109(c).

19. In § 26.86, remove and reserve paragraph (b) and add a sentence to the end of paragraph (c) to read as follows:

§ 26.86 What rules govern recipients’ denials of initial requests for certification?

(c) * * * * An applicant’s appeal of your decision to the Department
pursuant to § 26.89 does not extend this period.

20. In § 26.87, revise paragraphs (f) and (g) to read as follows:

§ 26.87 What procedures does a recipient use to remove a DBE’s eligibility?

(f) Grounds for decision. You may base a decision to remove a firm’s eligibility only on one or more of the following grounds:

(1) Changes in the firm’s circumstances since the certification of the firm by the recipient that render the firm unable to meet the eligibility standards of this part;

(2) Information or evidence not available to you at the time the firm was certified;

(3) Information relevant to eligibility that has been concealed or misrepresented by the firm;

(4) A change in the certification standards or requirements of the Department since you certified the firm;

(5) Your decision to certify the firm was clearly erroneous;

(6) The firm has failed to cooperate with you (see § 26.109(c));

(7) The firm has exhibited a pattern of conduct indicating its involvement in attempts to subvert the intent or requirements of the DBE program (see § 26.73(a)(2)); or

(8) The firm has been suspended or debarred for conduct related to the DBE program. The notice required by paragraph (g) of this section must include a copy of the suspension or debarment action. A decision to remove a firm for this reason shall not be subject to the hearing procedures in paragraph (d) of this section.

(g) Notice of decision. Following your decision, you must provide the firm written notice of the decision and the reasons for it, including specific references to the evidence in the record that supports each reason for the decision. The notice must inform the firm of the consequences of your decision and of the availability of an appeal to the Department of Transportation under § 26.89. You must send copies of the notice to the complainant in an ineligibility complaint or the concerned operating administration that had directed you to initiate the proceeding. Provided that, when sending such a notice to a complainant other than a DOT operating administration, you must not include information reasonably construed as confidential business information without the written consent of the firm that submitted the information.

21. Add § 26.88 to read as follows:

§ 26.88 Summary suspension of certification.

(a) A recipient shall immediately suspend a DBE’s certification without adhering to the requirements in § 26.87(d) of this part when an individual owner whose ownership and control of the firm are necessary to the firm’s certification dies or is incarcerated.

(b)(1) A recipient may immediately suspend a DBE’s certification without adhering to the requirements in § 26.87(d) when there is adequate evidence to believe that there has been a material change in circumstances that may affect the eligibility of the DBE firm to remain certified, or when the DBE fails to notify the recipient or UCP in writing of any material change in circumstances as required by § 26.83(i) of this part or fails to timely file an affidavit of no change under § 26.83(j).

(2) In determining the adequacy of the evidence to issue a suspension under paragraph (b)(1) of this section, the recipient shall consider all relevant factors, including how much information is available, the credibility of the information and allegations given the circumstances, whether or not important allegations are corroborated, and what inferences can reasonably be drawn as a result.

(c) The concerned operating administration may direct the recipient to take action pursuant to paragraph (a) or (b) of this section if it determines that information available to it is sufficient to warrant immediate suspension.

(d) When a firm is suspended pursuant to paragraph (a) or (b) of this section, the recipient shall immediately notify the DBE of the suspension by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the last known address of the owner(s) of the DBE.

(e) Suspension is a temporary status of ineligibility pending an expedited show cause hearing/proceeding under § 26.87 of this part to determine whether the DBE is eligible to participate in the program and consequently should be removed. The suspension takes effect when the DBE receives, or is deemed to have received, the Notice of Suspension.

(f) While suspended, the DBE may not be considered to meet a contract goal on a new contract, and any work it does on a contract received during the suspension shall not be counted toward a recipient’s overall goal. The DBE may continue to perform under an existing contract executed before the DBE received a suspension and may be counted toward the contract goal during the period of suspension as long as the DBE is performing a commercially useful function under the existing contract.

(g) Following receipt of the Notice of Suspension, if the DBE believes it is no longer eligible, it may voluntarily withdraw from the program, in which case no further action is required. If the DBE believes that its eligibility should be reinstated, it must provide to the recipient information demonstrating that the firm is eligible notwithstanding its changed circumstances. Within 30 days of receiving this information, the recipient must either lift the suspension and reinstate the firm’s certification or commence a decertification action under § 26.87 of this part. If the recipient commences a decertification proceeding, the suspension remains in effect during the proceeding.

(h) The decision to immediately suspend a DBE under paragraph (a) or (b) of this section is not appealable to the US Department of Transportation. The failure of a recipient to either lift the suspension and reinstate the firm or commence a decertification proceeding, as required by paragraph (g) of this section, is appealable to the US Department of Transportation under § 26.89 of this part, as a constructive decertification.

22. In § 26.89, revise paragraphs (a)(1) and (3), (c), and (e) to read as follows:

§ 26.89 What is the process for certification appeals to the Department of Transportation?

(a)(1) If you are a firm that is denied certification or whose eligibility is removed by a recipient, including SBA-certified firms, you may make an administrative appeal to the Department.

(3) Send appeals to the following address: U.S. Department of Transportation, Departmental Office of Civil Rights, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590–0001.

(c) If you want to file an appeal, you must send a letter to the Department within 90 days of the date of the recipient’s final decision, including information and setting forth a full and specific statement as to why the decision is erroneous, what significant fact that the recipient failed to consider, or what provisions of this Part the recipient did not properly apply. The Department may accept an appeal filed later than 90 days after the date of the decision if the Department determines that there was good cause for the late
filing of the appeal or in the interest of justice.

* * * * *

(e) The Department makes its decision based solely on the entire administrative record as supplemented by the appeal. The Department does not make a de novo review of the matter and does not conduct a hearing. The Department may also supplement the administrative record by adding relevant information made available by the DOT Office of Inspector General; Federal, State, or local law enforcement authorities; officials of a DOT operating administration or other appropriate DOT office; a recipient; or a firm or other private party.

* * * * *

23. Revise appendix A to Part 26 to read as follows:

Appendix A to Part 26—Guidance Concerning Good Faith Efforts

I. When, as a recipient, you establish a contract goal on a DOT-assisted contract for procuring construction, equipment, services, or any other purpose, a bidder must, in order to be responsible and/or responsive, make sufficient good faith efforts to meet the goal. The bidder can meet this requirement in either of two ways. First, the bidder can meet the goal, documenting commitments for participation by DBE firms sufficient for this purpose. Second, even if it doesn’t meet the goal, the bidder can document adequate good faith efforts. This means that the bidder must show that it took all necessary and reasonable steps to achieve a DBE goal or other requirement of this part which, by their scope, intensity, and appropriateness to the objective, could reasonably be expected to obtain sufficient DBE participation, even if they were not fully successful.

II. In any situation in which you have established a contract goal, Part 26 requires you to use the good faith efforts mechanism of this part. As a recipient, you have the responsibility to make a fair and reasonable judgment whether a bidder that did not meet the goal made adequate good faith efforts. It is important for you to consider the quality, quantity, and intensity of the different kinds of efforts that the bidder has made, based on the regulations and the guidance in this Appendix.

The efforts employed by the bidder should be those that one could reasonably expect a bidder to take if the bidder were actively and aggressively trying to obtain DBE participation sufficient to meet the DBE contract goal. Mere pro forma efforts are not good faith efforts to meet the DBE contract requirements. We emphasize, however, that your determination concerning the sufficiency of the bidder’s good faith efforts is a judgment call. Determinations should not be made using quantitative formulas.

III. The Department also strongly cautions you against requiring that a bidder meet a contract goal [i.e., obtain a specified amount of DBE participation] in order to be awarded a contract, even though the bidder makes an adequate good faith efforts showing. This rule specifically prohibits you from ignoring bona fide good faith efforts.

IV. The following is a list of types of actions which you should consider as part of the bidder’s good faith efforts to obtain DBE participation. It is not intended to be a mandatory checklist, nor is it intended to be exclusive or exhaustive. Other factors or types of efforts may be relevant in appropriate cases.

A. (1) Conducing market research to identify qualified DBEs to perform the work selected for DBEs to perform the work or material needs consistent with the minimum, you must review the performance work items with its own forces. This may include attendance at pre-bid and business matching meetings and events, advertising and/or written notices, posting of Notices of Sources Sought and/or Requests for Proposals, written notices or emails to all DBEs listed in the State’s directory of transportation firms that specialize in the areas of work selected for the bid (or listed in the DBE directory) and which are located in the area or surrounding areas of the project.

(2) The bidder should solicit this interest as early in the acquisition process as practicable to allow the DBEs to respond to the solicitation and submit a timely offer for the subcontract. The bidder should determine with certainty if the DBEs are interested by taking appropriate steps to follow up initial solicitations.

B. Selecting portions of the work to be performed by DBEs in order to increase the likelihood that the DBE goal will be achieved. This includes, where appropriate, breaking out contract work items into economically feasible units (for example, smaller tasks or quantities) to facilitate DBE participation, even when the prime contractor might otherwise prefer to perform these work items with its own forces. This may include, where possible, establishing flexible timeframes for performance and delivery schedules in a manner that encourages and facilitates DBE participation.

C. Providing interested DBEs with adequate information about the plans, specifications, and requirements of the contract in a timely manner to assist them with obtaining necessary equipment, supplies, or related assistance or services. Where possible, subcontractors and suppliers and soliciting through all available minority/women community organizations, or associations and political or social affiliations (for example union vs. non-union status) are not legitimate causes for the rejection or non-solicitation of bids in the contractor’s efforts to meet the project goal. Another practice considered an insufficient good faith effort is the rejection of a DBE because its quotation for the work was not the lowest received. However, nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to require the bidder or prime contractor to accept unreasonable quotes in order to satisfy contract goals.

(2) A prime contractor’s inability to find a replacement DBE at the original price is not alone sufficient to support a finding that good faith efforts have been made to replace the original DBE. The contractor has the responsibility to make a fair and reasonable judgment whether a bidder that did not meet the DBE goal, the contractor made good faith efforts to find a replacement DBE, and it is not a sound basis for rejecting the contractor’s obligation to make good faith efforts to find a replacement DBE, and it is not a sound basis for rejecting a prospective replacement DBE’s reasonable quotes.

F. Making efforts to assist interested DBEs in obtaining bonding, lines of credit, or insurance as required by the recipient or contractor.

G. Making efforts to assist interested DBEs in obtaining necessary equipment, supplies, materials, or related assistance or services.

H. Effectively using the services of available minority/women community organizations; minority/women contractors’ groups; local, State, and Federal minority/women business assistance offices; and other organizations as allowed on a case-by-case basis to provide assistance in the recruitment and placement of DBEs.

V. In determining whether a bidder has made good faith efforts, it is essential to scrutinize its documented efforts. At a minimum, you must review the performance of other bidders in meeting the contract goal. For example, when the apparent successful bidder fails to meet the contract goal, but others meet it, you may reasonably raise the question of whether, with additional efforts, the apparent successful bidder could have met the contract goal. If the apparent successful bidder fails to meet the goal, but meets or exceeds the average DBE participation obtained by other bidders, you may view this, in conjunction with other factors, as evidence of the apparent successful bidder having made good faith efforts. As provided in §26.53(b)(6)(v), you must also require the
contractor to submit copies of each DBE and non-DBE subcontractor quote submitted to the bidder when a non-DBE subcontractor was selected over a DBE for work on the contract to review whether DBE prices were substantially higher; and contact the DBEs listed in a contract solicitation to inquire as to whether they were contacted by the prime. Pro forma mailings to DBEs requesting bids are not alone sufficient to satisfy good faith efforts under the rule.

VI. A promise to use DBEs after contract award is not considered to be responsive to the contract solicitation or to constitute good faith efforts.

24. Revise appendix B to part 26 to read as follows:

Appendix B to 49 CFR Part 26—Uniform Report of DBE Awards or Commitments and Payments Form

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE UNIFORM REPORT OF DBE AWARDS/COMMITMENTS AND PAYMENTS

Recipients of Department of Transportation (DOT) Funds are expected to keep accurate data regarding the contracting opportunities available to firms paid for with DOT dollars. Failure to submit contracting data relative to the DBE program will result in noncompliance with Part 26. All dollar values listed on this form should represent the DOT share attributable to the Operating Administration (OA): Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) or Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to which this report will be submitted.

1. Indicate the DOT (OA) that provides your Federal financial assistance. If assistance comes from more than one OA, use separate reporting forms for each OA. If you are an FTA recipient, indicate your Vende Triplicate in the space provided.

2. If you are an FAA recipient, indicate the relevant AIP Numbers covered by this report. If you are an FTA recipient, indicate the Grant/Project numbers covered by this report. If more than ten attach a separate sheet.

3. Specify the fiscal year (i.e., October 1–September 30) in which the covered reporting period falls.

4. State the date of submission of this report.

5. Check the appropriate box that indicates the reporting period that the data provided in this report covers. For FHWA and FTA recipients, if this report is due June 1, data should cover October 1–March 31. If this report is due December 1, data should cover April 1–September 30. If the report is due to the FAA, data should cover the entire year.

6. Provide the name and address of the recipient.

7. State your overall DBE goal(s) established for the Federal fiscal year of the report being submitted to and approved by the relevant OA. Your overall goal is to be reported as well as the breakdown for specific Race Conscious and Race Neutral projections (both of which include gender-conscious/neutral projections). The Race Conscious projection should be based on measures that focus on and provide benefits only for DBEs. The use of contract goals is a primary example of a race conscious measure. The Race Neutral projection should include measures that, while benefiting DBEs, are not solely focused on DBE firms. For example, a small business outreach program, technical assistance, and prompt payment clauses to a wide variety of businesses in addition to helping DBE firms.

Section A: Awards and Commitments Made During This Period

The amounts in items 8(A)–10(I) should include all types of prime contracts awarded and all types of subcontracts awarded or committed, including: professional or consultant services, construction, purchase of materials or supplies, lease or purchase of equipment and any other types of services. All dollar amounts are to reflect only the Federal share of such contracts and should be rounded to the nearest dollar.

Line 8: Prime contracts awarded this period: The items on this line should correspond to the contracts directly between the recipient and a supply or service contractor, with no intermediaries between the two.

8(A). Provide the total dollar amount for all prime contracts assisted with DOT funds and awarded during this reporting period. This value should include the entire Federal share of the contracts without removing any amounts associated with resulting subcontracts.

8(B). Provide the total number of all prime contracts assisted with DOT funds and awarded during this reporting period.

8(C). From the total dollar amount awarded in item 8(A), provide the dollar amount awarded in prime contracts to certified DBE firms during this reporting period. This amount should not include the amounts sub contracted to other firms.

8(D). From the total number of prime contracts awarded in item 8(B), specify the number of prime contracts awarded to certified DBE firms during this reporting period.

8(E) & (F). This field is closed for data entry. Except for the very rare case of DBE-set aside contracts permitted under 49 CFR part 26, all prime contracts awarded to DBEs are regarded as race-neutral.

8(G). From the total dollar amount awarded in item 8(C), provide the dollar amount awarded to certified DBEs through the use of Race Neutral methods. See the definition of Race Neutral in item 7 and the explanation in item 8 of project types to include.

8(H). From the total number of prime contracts awarded in 8(D), specify the number awarded to DBEs through Race Neutral methods.

8(I). Of all prime contracts awarded this reporting period, calculate the percentage going to DBEs. Divide the dollar amount in item 8(G) by the dollar amount in item 8(A) to derive this percentage. Round percentage to the nearest tenth.

Line 9: Total contracts awarded or committed this period, provide the number of all contracts awarded or committed to DBEs.

9(A). If filling out the form for general reporting, provide the total dollar amount of subcontracts assisted with DOT funds awarded or committed during this period. This value should be a subset of the total dollars awarded in prime contracts in 8(A), and therefore should never be greater than the amount awarded in prime contracts.

9(B). Provide the total number of all sub contracts assisted with DOT funds that were awarded or committed during this reporting period.

9(C). From the total dollar amount of sub contracts awarded/committed this period in item 9(A), provide the total dollar amount awarded in sub contracts to DBEs.

9(D). From the total number of sub contracts awarded or committed in item 9(B), specify the number of sub contracts awarded or committed to DBEs.

9(E). From the total dollar amount of sub contracts awarded or committed to DBEs this period, provide the amount in dollars to DBEs using Race Conscious measures.

9(F). From the total number of sub contracts awarded or committed to DBEs this period, provide the number of sub contracts awarded or committed to DBEs using Race Neutral measures.

9(G). From the total dollar amount of sub contracts awarded or committed to DBEs this period, provide the amount in dollars to DBEs using Race Conscious measures.

9(H). From the total number of sub contracts awarded or committed to DBEs this period, provide the number of sub contracts awarded or committed to DBEs using Race Neutral measures.

9(I). Of all sub contracts awarded this reporting period, calculate the percentage going to DBEs. Divide the dollar amount in item 9(C) by the dollar amount in item 9(A) to derive this percentage. Round percentage to the nearest tenth.

Line 10: Total contracts awarded or committed this period. These fields should be used to show the total dollar value and number of contracts awarded to DBEs and to calculate the overall percentage of dollars awarded to DBEs.

10(A)–10(B). These fields are unavailable for data entry.

10(C–H). Combine the total values listed on the prime contracts line (Line 8) with the corresponding values on the subcontract line (Line 9).

10(I). Of all contracts awarded this reporting period, calculate the percentage going to DBEs. Divide the total dollars awarded to DBEs in item 10(C) by the dollar amount in item 8(A) to derive this percentage. Round percentage to the nearest tenth.
Section B: Breakdown by Ethnicity & Gender of Contracts Awarded to DBEs This Period

11–17. Further breakdown the contracting activity with DBE involvement. The Total Dollar Amount to DBEs in 17(C) should equal the Total Dollar Amount to DBEs in 10(C). Likewise the total number of contracts to DBEs in 17(F) should equal the Total Number of Contracts to DBEs in 10(D).

Line 16: The “Non-Minority” category is reserved for any firms whose owners are not members of the presumptively disadvantaged groups already listed, but who are either “women” OR eligible for the DBE program on an individual basis. All DBE firms must be certified by the Unified Certification Program to be counted in this report.

Section C: Payments on Ongoing Contracts

Line 18(A–E). Submit information on contracts that are currently in progress. All dollar amounts are to reflect only the Federal share of such contracts, and should be rounded to the nearest dollar.

18(A). Provide the total dollar amount paid to all firms performing work on contracts.

18(B). Provide the total number of contracts where work was performed during the reporting period.

18(C). From the total number of contracts provided in 18(A) provide the total number of contracts that are currently being performed by DBE firms for which payments have been made.

18(D). From the total dollar amount paid to all firms in 18(A), provide the total dollar value paid to DBE firms currently performing work during this period.

18(E). Provide the total number of DBE firms that received payment during this reporting period. For example, while 3 contracts may be active during this period, one DBE firm may be providing supplies or services on all three contracts. This field should only list the number of DBE firms performing work.

18(F). Of all payments made during this period, calculate the percentage going to DBEs. Divide the total dollar value to DBEs in item 18(D) by the total dollars of all payments in 18(B). Round percentage to the nearest tenth.

Section D: Actual Payments on Contracts Completed This Reporting Period

This section should provide information only on contracts that are closed during this period. All dollar amounts are to reflect the entire Federal share of such contracts, and should be rounded to the nearest dollar.

19(A). Provide the total number of contracts completed during this reporting period that used Race Conscious measures. Race Conscious contracts are those with contract goals or another race conscious measure.

19(B). Provide the total dollar value of prime contracts completed this reporting period that used Race Conscious measures.

19(C). From the total dollar value of prime contracts completed this period in 19(B), provide the total dollar amount of dollars awarded or committed to DBE firms in order to meet the contract goals. This applies only to Race Conscious contracts.

19(D). Provide the actual total DBE participation in dollars on the race conscious contracts completed this reporting period.

19(E). Of all the contracts completed this reporting period using Race Conscious measures, calculate the percentage of DBE participation. Divide the total dollar amount to DBEs in item 19(D) by the total dollar value provided in 19(B) to derive this percentage. Round to the nearest tenth.

20(A)–20(E). Items 21(A)–21(E) are derived in the same manner as items 19(A)–19(E), except these figures should be based on contracts completed using Race Neutral measures.

20(C). This field is closed.

21(A)–21(D). Calculate the totals for each column by adding the race conscious and neutral figures provided in each row above.

21(C). This field is closed.

21(E). Calculate the overall percentage of dollars to DBEs on completed contracts. Divide the Total DBE participation dollar value in 21(D) by the Total Dollar Value of Contracts Completed in 21(B) to derive this percentage. Round to the nearest tenth.

23. Name of the Authorized Representative preparing this form.

24. Signature of the Authorized Representative.

25. Phone number of the Authorized Representative.

**Submit your completed report to your Regional or Division Office.**

BILLING CODE 4910–9X–P
25. Revise appendix F to part 26 to read as follows:
AIRPORT CONCESSION DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISE (DBE) CERTIFICATION APPLICATION

Appendix F

49 C.F.R. Parts 12 and 26
Section 1: CERTIFICATION INFORMATION

A. Basic Contact Information

(1) Contact person and Title: __________________________ (2) Legal name of firm: __________________________

(3) Phone #: ( ) _______ - _______ (4) Other Phone #: ( ) _______ - _______ (5) Fax #: ( ) _______ - _______

(6) E-mail: ____________________________________________ (7) Firm Websites: __________________________

(8) Street address of firm (No P.O. Box): City: _______ County/Parish: _______ State: _______ Zip: _______

(9) Mailing address of firm (if different): City: _______ County/Parish: _______ State: _______ Zip: _______

B. Prior/Other Certifications and Applications

(10) Is your firm currently certified for any of the following U.S. DOT programs?

☐ DBE  ☐ ACDBE Names of certifying agencies: __________________________

If you are certified in your home state as a DBE/ACDBE, you do not have to complete this application for other states. Ask your state UCP about the interstate certification process.

List the dates of any site visits conducted by your home state and any other states or UCP members:

Date __/__/___ State/UCP Member: ______________ Date __/__/___ State/UCP Member: ______________

(11) Indicate whether the firm or any persons listed in this application have ever been:

(a) Denied certification or decertified as a DBE, ACDBE, 8(a), SDB, MBE/WBE firm?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No
(b) Withdrew an application for these programs, or debarred or suspended or otherwise had bidding privileges denied or restricted by any state or local agency, or Federal entity?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

If yes, explain the nature of the action. (If you appealed the decision to DOT or another agency, attach a copy of the decision.

Section 2: GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Business Profile: (1) Give a concise description of the firm’s primary activities and the product(s) or service(s) it provides. If your company offers more than one product/service, list the primary product or service first. Please use additional paper if necessary. This description may be used in our database and the UCP online directory if you are certified as a DBE or ACDBE.

__________________________________________

(2) Applicable NAICS Codes for this line of work include:

(3) This firm was established on ___/__/____

(4) I/We have owned this firm since: ___/__/____

(5) Method of acquisition (Check all that apply):

☐ Started new business  ☐ Bought existing business  ☐ Inherited business  ☐ Secured concession

☐ Merger or consolidation  ☐ Other (explain) __________________________

U.S. DOT Uniform DBE / ACDBE Certification Application • Page 5 of 15
(6) Is your firm “for profit”? Yes No STOP! If your firm is NOT for-profit, then you do NOT qualify for this program and should not fill out this application.

Federal Tax ID#

(7) Type of Legal Business Structure: (check all that apply):
- Sole Proprietorship
- Partnership
- Limited Liability Company
- Joint Venture (Identify all JV partners)
- Applying as an ACDBE
- Other. Describe

(8) Number of employees: Full-time Part-time Seasonal Total

(Please provide a list of employees, their job titles, and dates of employment, to your application).

(9) Specify the firm’s gross receipts for the last 3 years. (Submit complete copies of the firm’s Federal tax returns for each year. If there are affiliates or subsidiaries of the applicant firm or owners, you must submit complete copies of these firms’ Federal tax returns).

Year Gross Receipts of Applicant Firm $ Gross Receipts of Affiliate Firms $
Year Gross Receipts of Applicant Firm $ Gross Receipts of Affiliate Firms $
Year Gross Receipts of Applicant Firm $ Gross Receipts of Affiliate Firms $

B. Relationships and Dealings with Other Businesses

(1) Is your firm co-located at any of its business locations, or does it share a telephone number, P.O. Box, office or storage space, yard, warehouse, facilities, equipment, inventory, financing, office staff, and/or employees with any other business, organization, or entity? Yes No

If Yes, explain the nature of your relationship with these other businesses by identifying the business or person with whom you have any formal, informal, written, or oral agreement. Also detail the items shared.

(2) Has any other firm had an ownership interest in your firm at present or at any time in the past? Yes No If Yes, explain

(3) At present, or at any time in the past, has your firm:
   (a) Ever existed under different ownership, a different type of ownership, or a different name? Yes No
   (b) Existed as a subsidiary of any other firm? Yes No
   (c) Existed as a partnership in which one or more of the partners are/were other firms? Yes No
   (d) Owned any percentage of any other firm? Yes No
   (e) Had any subsidiaries? Yes No
   (f) Served as a subcontractor with another firm constituting more than 25% of your firm’s receipts? Yes No

(If you answered “Yes” to any of the questions in (2) and/or (3)(a)-ff, you may be asked to provide further details and explain whether the arrangement continues).
Section 3: MAJORITY OWNER INFORMATION

A. Identify the majority owner of the firm holding 51% or more ownership interest.

(1) Full Name: ____________________________ (2) Title: ____________________________ (3) Home Phone #: ( ) ____________

(4) Home Address (Street and Number): ____________________________________________

City: ____________________________ State: ______ Zip: ______

(5) Gender: □ Male □ Female

(6) Ethnic group membership (Check all that apply):

□ Black □ Asian Pacific □ Native American
□ Subcontinent Asian □ Other (specify) ____________________________

(7) U.S. Citizenship:

□ U.S. Citizen □ Lawfully Admitted Permanent Resident

(8) Number of years as owner: ________

(9) Percentage owned: ________%

Class of stock owned: ________________ Date acquired: ________________

(10) Initial investment to acquire ownership:

Type: ____________________________ Dollar Value: $ ____________

Interest in firm: ____________________________

Cash: $ ____________ Real Estate: $ ____________ Equipment: $ ____________ Other: $ ____________

Describe how you acquired your business:

□ Started business myself
□ It was a gift from: ____________________________
□ I bought it from: ____________________________
□ I inherited it from: ____________________________
□ Other ____________________________

(Attach documentation substantiating your investment)

B. Additional Owner Information

(1) Describe familial relationship to other owners and employees:

________________________________________________________________________

(2) Does this owner perform a management or supervisory function for any other business? □ Yes □ No

If Yes, identify: Name of Business: ____________________________ Function/Title: ____________________________

(3)(a) Does this owner own or work for any other firm(s) that has a relationship with this firm? (e.g., ownership interest, shared office space, financial investments, equipment, leases, personnel sharing, etc.) □ Yes □ No

Identify the name of the business, and the nature of the relationship, and the owner’s function at the firm:

________________________________________________________________________

(b) Does this owner work for any other firm, non-profit organization, or is engaged in any other activity more than 10 hours per week? If yes, identify this activity:

________________________________________________________________________

(4)(a) What is the personal net worth of this disadvantaged owner applying for certification? $ ____________

(b) Has any trust been created for the benefit of this disadvantaged owner(s)? □ Yes □ No

(If Yes, you may be asked to provide a copy of the trust instrument).

(5) Do any of your immediate family members, managers, or employees own, manage, or are associated with another company? □ Yes □ No

If Yes, provide their name, relationship, company, type of business, and indicate whether they own or manage the company: (Please attach extra sheets, if needed):

________________________________________________________________________

U.S. DOT Uniform DBE/ACDBE Certification Application • Page 7 of 14
### Section 3: OWNER INFORMATION, Cont’d.

**A. Identify all individuals, firms, or holding companies that hold LESS THAN 51% ownership interest in the firm** *(Attach separate sheets for each additional owner)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1) Full Name:</th>
<th>(2) Title:</th>
<th>(3) Home Phone #:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(4) Home Address (Street and Number):</th>
<th>City:</th>
<th>State:</th>
<th>Zip:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(5) Gender:</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(6) Ethnic group membership</th>
<th>(Check all that apply)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Asian Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(7) U.S. Citizenship:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>Lawfully Admitted Permanent Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<th>(8) Number of years as owner:</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(9) Percentage owned: Class of stock owned: Date acquired:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(10) Initial investment to acquire ownership:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe how you acquired your business:

- [ ] Started business myself
- [ ] It was a gift from:
- [ ] I bought it from:
- [ ] I inherited it from:
- [ ] Other

(Attach documentation substantiating your investment)

### B. Additional Owner Information

(1) Describe familial relationship to other owners and employees:

(2) Does this owner perform a management or supervisory function for any other business? [ ] Yes [ ] No

If Yes, identify: Name of Business: Function/Title:

(3(a) Does this owner own or work for any other firm(s) that has a relationship with this firm? *(e.g., ownership interest, shared office space, financial investments, equipment, leases, personnel sharing, etc.)* [ ] Yes [ ] No

Identify the name of the business, and the nature of the relationship, and the owner’s function at the firm:

(b) Does this owner work for any other firm, non-profit organization, or is engaged in any other activity more than 10 hours per week? If yes, identify this activity:

(4(a) What is the personal net worth of this disadvantaged owner applying for certification? $______

(b) Has any trust been created for the benefit of this disadvantaged owner(s)? [ ] Yes [ ] No

(If Yes, you may be asked to provide a copy of the trust instrument).

(5) Do any of your immediate family members, managers, or employees own, manage, or are associated with another company? [ ] Yes [ ] No

If Yes, provide their name, relationship, company, type of business, and indicate whether they own or manage: *(Please attach extra sheets, if needed):*
Section 4: CONTROL

A. Identify your firm’s Officers and Board of Directors (If additional space is required, attach a separate sheet):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date-appointed</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Officers of the Company</td>
<td>(a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b)</td>
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<td>(c)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(d)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Board of Directors</td>
<td>(a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(d)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(3) Do any of the persons listed above perform a management or supervisory function for any other business?
- Yes  No  If Yes, identify for each:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

(4) Do any of the persons listed in section A above own or work for any other firm(s) that has a relationship with this firm? (e.g., ownership interest, shared office space, financial investments, equipment, leases, personnel sharing, etc.)
- Yes  No  If Yes, identify for each:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firm Name</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Nature of Business Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

B. Duties of Owners, Officers, Directors, Managers, and Key Personnel

1. (Identify your firm’s management personnel who control your firm in the following areas (Attach separate sheets as needed).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A = Always</th>
<th>F = Frequently</th>
<th>S = Seldom</th>
<th>N = Never</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Percent Owned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority Owner (51% or more)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Percent Owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Owner (49% or less)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Percent Owned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Sets policy for company direction/scope of operations
- Bidding and estimating
- Major purchasing decisions
- Marketing and sales
- Supervises field operations
- Attends board meetings
- Attends bid opening and lettings
- Performs office management (billing, accounts receivable/payable, etc.)
- Hires and fires management staff
- Hire and fire field staff or crew
- Designates profits spending or investment
- Obligates business by contract/credit
- Purchase equipment
- Signs business checks

U.S. DOT Uniform DBE/ACDBE Certification Application • Page 9 of 14
2. Complete for all Officers, Directors, Managers, and Key Personnel who control the following functions for the firm. (Attach separate sheets as needed).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A = Always</th>
<th>F = Frequently</th>
<th>S = Seldom</th>
<th>N = Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>Race and Gender:</td>
<td>Percent Owned:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sets policy for company direction/scope of operations</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bidding and estimating</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>Major purchasing decisions</td>
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<td>Marketing and sales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervises field operations</td>
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<td>Attend bid opening and lettings</td>
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<td>Performs office management (billing, accounts receivable/payable, etc.)</td>
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<td>Hires and fires management staff</td>
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<td>Hires and fire field staff or crew</td>
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<tr>
<td>Designates profits spending or investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obligates business by contract/credit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purchase equipment</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signs business checks</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>S</td>
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</table>

Do any of the persons listed in B1 or B2 perform a management or supervisory function for any other business? If Yes, identify the person, the business, and their title/function:

Do any of the persons listed above own or work for any other firm(s) that has a relationship with this firm? (e.g., ownership interest, shared office space, financial investments, equipment, leases, personnel sharing, etc.) If Yes, describe the nature of the business relationship:

C. Inventory: Indicate your firm’s inventory in the following categories (Please attach additional sheets if needed):

1. Equipment and Vehicles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make and Model</th>
<th>Current Value</th>
<th>Owned or Leased by Firm or Owner?</th>
<th>Used as collateral?</th>
<th>Where is item stored?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. Office Space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street Address</th>
<th>Owned or Leased by Firm or Owner?</th>
<th>Current Value of Property or Lease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3. Storage Space (Provide signed lease agreements for the properties listed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street Address</th>
<th>Owned or Leased by Firm or Owner?</th>
<th>Current Value of Property or Lease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

D. Does your firm rely on any other firm for management functions or employee payroll?  
☐ Yes  ☐ No

E. Financial/Banking Information (Provide bank authorization and signature cards)

Name of bank: __________________________ City and State: __________________________
The following individuals are able to sign checks on this account: __________________________

Name of bank: __________________________ City and State: __________________________
The following individuals are able to sign checks on this account: __________________________

Bonding Information: If you have bonding capacity, identify the firm’s bonding aggregate and project limits:
Aggregate limit $ __________________________ Project limit $ __________________________

F. Identify all sources, amounts, and purposes of money loaned to your firm including from financial institutions. Identify whether you the owner and any other person or firm loaned money to the applicant DBE/ACDBE. Include the names of any persons or firms guaranteeing the loan, if other than the listed owner. (Provide copies of signed loan agreements and security agreements).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Source</th>
<th>Address of Source</th>
<th>Name of Person Guaranteeing the Loan</th>
<th>Original Amount</th>
<th>Current Balance</th>
<th>Purpose of Loan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1.</td>
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</table>

G. List all contributions or transfers of assets to/from your firm and to/from any of its owners or another individual over the past two years (Attach additional sheets if needed):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution/Asset</th>
<th>Dollar Value</th>
<th>From Whom Transferred</th>
<th>To Whom Transferred</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Date of Transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

H. List current licenses/permits held by any owner and/or employee of your firm  
(e.g. contractor, engineer, architect, etc.) (Attach additional sheets if needed):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of License/Permit Holder</th>
<th>Type of License/Permit</th>
<th>Expiration Date</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
I. List the three largest contracts completed by your firm in the past three years, if any:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Owner/Contractor</th>
<th>Name/Location of Project</th>
<th>Type of Work Performed</th>
<th>Dollar Value of Contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

J. List the three largest active jobs on which your firm is currently working:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Prime Contractor and Project Number</th>
<th>Location of Project</th>
<th>Type of Work</th>
<th>Project Start Date</th>
<th>Anticipated Completion Date</th>
<th>Dollar Value of Contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1.</td>
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</table>

**AIRPORT CONCESSION (ACDBE) APPLICANTS ONLY MUST COMPLETE THIS SECTION**

Identify the following information concerning the ACDBE applicant firm:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concession Space</th>
<th>Address / Location at Airport</th>
<th>Value of Property or Lease</th>
<th>Fees/Lease Payments Paid to the Airport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

Provide information concerning any other airport concession businesses the applicant firm or any affiliate owns and/or operates, including name, location, type of concession, and start date of concession:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Concession</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type of Concession</th>
<th>Start Date of Concession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
AFFIDAVIT OF CERTIFICATION

This form must be signed and notarized for each owner upon which disadvantaged status is relied.

A MATERIAL OR FALSE STATEMENT OR OMISSION MADE IN CONNECTION WITH THIS APPLICATION IS SUFFICIENT CAUSE FOR DENIAL OF CERTIFICATION, REVOCATION OF A PRIOR APPROVAL, INITIATION OF SUSPENSION OR DEBARMENT PROCEEDINGS, AND MAY SUBJECT THE PERSON AND/OR ENTITY MAKING THE FALSE STATEMENT TO ANY AND ALL CIVIL AND CRIMINAL PENALTIES AVAILABLE PURSUANT TO APPLICABLE FEDERAL AND STATE LAW.

I (full name printed), [title of the applicant firm], have read and understood all of the questions in this application and that all of the preceding information and statements submitted in this application and its attachments and supporting documents are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, and that all responses to the questions are full and complete, omitting no material information. The responses include all material information necessary to fully and accurately identify and explain the operations, capabilities and pertinent history of the named firm as well as the ownership, control, and affiliations thereof.

I recognize that the information submitted in this application is for the purpose of inducing certification approval and that a government agency, by means it deems appropriate, determine the accuracy and truth of the statements in the application, and I authorize such agency to contact any entity named in the application, and the named firm’s bonding companies, banking institutions, credit agencies, contractors, clients, and other certifying agencies for the purpose of verifying the information supplied and determining the named firm’s eligibility.

I agree to submit to government audit, examination and review of books, records, documents and files, in whatever form they exist, of the named firm and its affiliates, inspection of its places(s) of business and equipment, and to permit interviews of its principals, agents, and employees. I understand that refusal to permit such inquiries shall be grounds for denial of certification.

If awarded a contract, subcontract, concession lease or sublease, I agree to promptly and directly provide the prime contractor, if any, and the Department, recipient agency, or federal funding agency on an ongoing basis, current, complete and accurate information regarding (1) work performed on the project; (2) payments; and (3) proposed changes, if any, to the foregoing arrangements.

I agree to provide written notice to the recipient agency or Unified Certification Program of any material change in the information contained in the original application within 30 calendar days of such change (e.g., ownership changes, address/telephone number, personal net worth exceeding $1.32 million, etc.).

I acknowledge and agree that any misrepresentations in this application or in records pertaining to a contract or subcontract will be grounds for terminating any contract or subcontract which may be awarded; denial or revocation of certification; suspension and debarment; and for initiating action under federal and/or state law concerning false statement, fraud or other applicable offenses.

I certify that I am a socially and economically disadvantaged individual who is an owner of the above-referenced firm seeking certification as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise or Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise. In support of my application, I certify that I am a member of one or more of the following groups, and that I have held myself out as a member of the group(s): (Check all that apply):

- Female
- Black American
- Hispanic American
- Native American
- Asian-Pacific American
- Subcontinent Asian American
- Other (specify)

I certify that I am socially disadvantaged because I have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias, or have suffered the effects of discrimination, because of my identity as a member of one or more of the groups identified above, without regard to my individual qualities.

I further certify that my personal net worth does not exceed $1.32 million, and that I am economically disadvantaged because my ability to compete in the free enterprise system has been impaired due to diminished capital and credit opportunities as compared to others in the same or similar line of business who are not socially and economically disadvantaged.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the information provided in this application and supporting documents is true and correct.

Signature

(Date)

NOTARY CERTIFICATE

U.S. DOT Uniform DBE/ACDBE Certification Application • Page 13 of 14
Appendix G to Part 26—Personal Net Worth Statement

VerDate Sep<11>2014 17:25 Oct 01, 2014 Jkt 235001 PO 00000 Frm 00053 Fmt 4701 Sfmt 4700 E:\FR\FM\02OCR2.SGM 02OCR2
# Personal Net Worth Statement

**U.S. Department of Transportation**

**For DBE/ACDBE Program Eligibility**

**As of [Date]**

This form is used by all participants in the U.S. Department of Transportation's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Programs. Each individual owner of a firm applying to participate as a DBE or ACDBE, whose ownership and control are relied upon for DBE certification must complete this form. Each person signing this form authorizes the Unified Certification Program (UCP) recipient to make inquiries as necessary to verify the accuracy of the statements made. The agency you apply to will use the information provided to determine whether an owner is economically disadvantaged as defined in the DBE program regulations 49 C.F.R. Parts 23 and 26. Return form to appropriate UCP certifying member, not U.S. DOT.

### Name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence Address (As reported to the IRS)</th>
<th>Business Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City, State and Zip Code</td>
<td>Residence Phone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Business Name of Applicant Firm

### Spouse's Full Name

(Marital Status: Single, Married, Divorced, Union)

### Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS</th>
<th>(Omit Cents)</th>
<th>LIABILITIES</th>
<th>(Omit Cents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and Cash Equivalents</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Loan on Life Insurance (Complete Section 5)</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement Accounts (IRAs, 401(k)s, 403(b)s, Pensions, etc.) Report full value minus tax and interest penalties that would apply if assets were distributed today (Complete Section 3)</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Mortgages on Real Estate Excluding Primary Residence Debt (Complete Section 4)</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brokerage, Investment Accounts</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Notes, Obligations on Personal Property (Complete Section 6)</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets Held in Trust</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Notes &amp; Accounts Payable to Banks and Others (Complete Section 2)</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans to Shareholders &amp; Other Receivables (Complete section 6)</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Other Liabilities (Complete Section 8)</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate Excluding Primary Residence (Complete Section 4)</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Unpaid Taxes (Complete Section 8)</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Insurance (Cash Surrender Value Only) (Complete Section 5)</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Personal Property and Assets (Complete Section 6)</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Interests Other Than the Applicant Firm (Complete Section 7)</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Assets $**

**Total Liabilities $**

**NET WORTH $**

### Section 2. Notes Payable to Banks and Others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Noteholder(s)</th>
<th>Original Balance</th>
<th>Current Balance</th>
<th>Payment Amount</th>
<th>Frequency (monthly, etc.)</th>
<th>How Secured or Endorsed Type of Collateral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

U.S. DOT Personal Net Worth Statement for DBE/ACDBE Program Eligibility • Page 1 of 5
### Section 3. Brokerage and Custodial Accounts, Stocks, Bonds, Retirement Accounts (Full Value) (Use Attachments if necessary)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Security / Brokerage Account / Retirement Account</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Market Value Quotation/Exchange</th>
<th>Date of Quotation/Exchange</th>
<th>Total Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Section 4. Real Estate Owned (including Primary Residence, Investment Properties, Personal Property Leased or Rented for Business Purposes, Farm Properties, or any Other Income Producing property). (List each parcel separately. Add additional sheets if necessary.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Property</th>
<th>Primary Residence</th>
<th>Property B</th>
<th>Property C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Acquired and Method of Acquisition (purchase, inhered, divorce, gift, etc.)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names on Deed</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase Price</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Market Value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Market Valuation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of all Mortgage Holders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage Acc #: and balance (as of date of form)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity line of credit balance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Amount of Payment Per Month/Year (Specify)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Section 5. Life Insurance Held (Give face amount and cash surrender value of policies, name of insurance company and beneficiaries.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insurance Company</th>
<th>Face Value</th>
<th>Cash Surrender Amount</th>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Loan on Policy Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Section 6. Other Personal Property and Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Property or Asset</th>
<th>Total Present Value</th>
<th>Amount of Liability (Balance)</th>
<th>Is this asset insured?</th>
<th>Lien or Note amount and Terms of Payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Automobiles and Vehicles (including recreation vehicles, motorcycles, boats, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Goods / Jewelry</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (List)</td>
<td></td>
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### Section 7. Value of Other Business Investments, Other Businesses Owned (excluding applicant firm)

- Sole Proprietorships
- General Partnerships
- Joint Ventures
- Limited Liability Companies
- Closely-held and Public Traded Corporations

### Section 8. Other Liabilities and Unpaid Taxes

**Describe**

### Section 9. Transfer of Assets: Have you within 2 years of this personal net worth statement, transferred assets to a spouse, domestic partner, relative, or entity in which you have an ownership or beneficial interest including a trust? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, describe.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the information provided in this personal net worth statement and supporting documents is complete, true and correct. I certify that no assets have been transferred to any beneficiary for less than fair market value in the last two years. I recognize that the information submitted in this application is for the purpose of inducing certification approval by a government agency. I understand that a government agency may, by means it deems appropriate, determine the accuracy and truth of the statements in the application and this personal net worth statement, and I authorize such agency to contact any entity named in the application or this personal financial statement, including the names of banking institutions, credit agencies, contractors, clients, and other certifying agencies for the purpose of verifying the information supplied and determining the named firm's eligibility. I acknowledge and agree that any misrepresentations in this application or in records pertaining to a contract or subcontract will be grounds for terminating any contract or subcontract which may be awarded, denial or revocation of certification, suspension and debarment, and for initiating action under federal and/or state law concerning false statement, fraud or other applicable offenses.

**NOTARY CERTIFICATE:**

(Insert applicable state acknowledgment, affirmation, or oath)

Signature (DBE/ACDBE Owner) ___________________________ Date: __________________

In collecting the information requested by this form, the Department of Transportation complies with Federal Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552 and 552a) provisions. The Privacy Act provides comprehensive protections for your personal information. This includes how information is collected, used, disclosed, stored, and discarded. Your information will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent. The information collected will be used solely to determine your firm's eligibility to participate in the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program or Airport Concessionaire DBE Programs as defined in 49 C.F.R. Parts 23 and 26. You may review DOT's complete Privacy Act Statement in the Federal Register published on April 11, 2000 (65 FR 19477).
Section 2. Written Statement of Current and Past Business Interests.

(a) Business Interests. The form asks for information about the business interests of the applicant. In the section, you should provide a list of all businesses that you have either owned or controlled. This includes any partnerships or corporations in which you have held a significant position.

(b) Personal Interest. In this section, you should describe any personal interests that may conflict with your business interests. This includes any investments, loans, or other financial arrangements that may affect your ability to conduct business.

(c) Other Business Interests. You should also provide information about any other business interests that may affect your ability to conduct business. This includes any foreign investments or partnerships.

(d) Written Statement. Your written statement should be signed and dated. It should confirm that the information provided is true and accurate.


(a) Financial Interests. This section asks for information about your financial interests. You should provide a list of all financial interests that you have held or controlled.

(b) Personal Financial Interests. In this section, you should describe any personal financial interests that may conflict with your business interests. This includes any investments or loans that you have held.

(c) Other Financial Interests. You should also provide information about any other financial interests that may affect your ability to conduct business. This includes any foreign investments or partnerships.

(d) Written Statement. Your written statement should be signed and dated. It should confirm that the information provided is true and accurate.


(a) Employment Interests. This section asks for information about your employment interests. You should provide a list of all employment interests that you have held.

(b) Personal Employment Interests. In this section, you should describe any personal employment interests that may conflict with your business interests. This includes any positions that you have held.

(c) Other Employment Interests. You should also provide information about any other employment interests that may affect your ability to conduct business. This includes any foreign employment.

(d) Written Statement. Your written statement should be signed and dated. It should confirm that the information provided is true and accurate.

Section 5. Written Statement of Current and Past Educational Interests.

(a) Educational Interests. This section asks for information about your educational interests. You should provide a list of all educational interests that you have held.

(b) Personal Educational Interests. In this section, you should describe any personal educational interests that may conflict with your business interests. This includes any degrees or certifications that you have obtained.

(c) Other Educational Interests. You should also provide information about any other educational interests that may affect your ability to conduct business. This includes any foreign educational institutions.

(d) Written Statement. Your written statement should be signed and dated. It should confirm that the information provided is true and accurate.


(a) Professional Interests. This section asks for information about your professional interests. You should provide a list of all professional interests that you have held.

(b) Personal Professional Interests. In this section, you should describe any personal professional interests that may conflict with your business interests. This includes any positions that you have held.

(c) Other Professional Interests. You should also provide information about any other professional interests that may affect your ability to conduct business. This includes any foreign professional associations.

(d) Written Statement. Your written statement should be signed and dated. It should confirm that the information provided is true and accurate.


(a) Social Interests. This section asks for information about your social interests. You should provide a list of all social interests that you have held.

(b) Personal Social Interests. In this section, you should describe any personal social interests that may conflict with your business interests. This includes any volunteer work or other social activities.

(c) Other Social Interests. You should also provide information about any other social interests that may affect your ability to conduct business. This includes any foreign social organizations.

(d) Written Statement. Your written statement should be signed and dated. It should confirm that the information provided is true and accurate.

Section 8. Written Statement of Current and Past Organizational Interests.

(a) Organizational Interests. This section asks for information about your organizational interests. You should provide a list of all organizational interests that you have held.

(b) Personal Organizational Interests. In this section, you should describe any personal organizational interests that may conflict with your business interests. This includes any positions that you have held.

(c) Other Organizational Interests. You should also provide information about any other organizational interests that may affect your ability to conduct business. This includes any foreign organizations.

(d) Written Statement. Your written statement should be signed and dated. It should confirm that the information provided is true and accurate.