

City of Seattle Disparity Study Frequently Asked Questions



Colette Holt & Associates (“CHA”) will be conducting a disparity study for the City of Seattle (“City”) for its Woman- and Minority Owned Business Enterprise (“W/MBE”) Program. It is planned to begin in the Fall of 2021. The City seeks to ensure that W/MBEs have equal access to contracting opportunities and that the City’s current initiatives remain legally defensible and administratively successful.

What is a “Disparity Study”?

A disparity study involves compilation of evidence to determine whether W/MBEs have equal opportunities on City projects. This includes statistical evidence of disparities, if any, between the availability of W/MBEs and their utilization on City contracts and related subcontracts and throughout the Seattle economy as a whole.

The study will further examine factors necessary for entrepreneurial success, such as access to business capital, bonding, networks, suppliers and other resources. The study also will gather anecdotal evidence of any continuing effects of past or present race and sex discrimination, and the impact of the current City programs. Finally, the study will review the City’s current efforts and activities and make recommendations for future initiatives and enhancements.

Who is conducting the study?

Colette Holt & Associates (CHA), a nationally recognized expert team on disparity studies and M/WBE programs, in conjunction with local partners Yates Consulting and Contacto.

How can business owners be involved?

The participation of business owners and other interested parties is critical to the study’s outcomes in two important ways. The study team will contact businesses to confirm information on specific contracts and/or to receive additional contract information that is currently not available to the City. Second, CHA will conduct an electronic survey and interviews with business owners to collect information regarding discriminatory barriers and current City initiatives.

Participants who are unable to attend the interviews but who would like to provide input to the disparity study are encouraged to submit written statements at the study email: seattle-study@mwbelaw.com.

When will the study be completed?

The study is anticipated to be completed in late 2022.

Where can I find additional information?

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

Who do I contact with questions?

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

Or you may contact:

Edson Ives Zavala, PMP
Purchasing and Contracting Division Contracting
Equity Advisor
edson.zavala@seattle.gov
(206) 305-4815