



Getting Your Business Certified



What Is Inclusive Sourcing?

Inclusive sourcing, also known as supplier diversity, is a federally recognized initiative that helps diverse enterprises gain visibility and more effectively compete for business. A diverse enterprise is a business that is at least 51% owned and operated by an individual or group that is part of a traditionally underrepresented or underserved group.

Inclusive sourcing was first introduced in 1953 with the establishment of the Small Business Administration (SBA), which helped ensure that small businesses were given a fair and equal opportunity to bid on and be awarded federal contracts. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy amended a federal order to take affirmative action into consideration for federal contracting, and in 1968, a combination of social, political, and economic conditions compelled companies like IBM, General Motors, AT&T, and others to launch their own inclusive sourcing programs.

Why Get Certified?

Supplier diversity certification is a nationally recognized means for companies to confirm that a supplier is indeed diverse. Different certifications exist for specific underrepresented groups, including small businesses and enterprises owned by federally recognized minorities, women, veterans, people living with disabilities, or members of the LGBTQ community.

Certification is granted by a third party that reviews a company's application and business documentation, conducts interviews, and possibly performs on-site visits. Altogether, an application may take several weeks to be approved, but once it is, the certification is valid for the period extended by the issuing agency.

Certification is a great tool for marketing your business to companies with inclusive sourcing programs. In fact, **Upwork requires businesses to be certified under at least one of the five diversity classifications listed below to be included in our Inclusive Sourcing program.**

How to Get Certified

The first step is to decide which certification applies to your business. This will depend on how you, the owners(s), self-identify and which diversity classification requirements you meet.

In order to participate in Upwork's Inclusive Sourcing program, your business will need to be certified under one or more of the following classifications:

- ***Certified Minority-Owned Business Enterprise (MBE)***

A business that is at least 51% owned and operated by one or more individuals who are Black American, Hispanic American, Native American, Asian-Pacific American, or Subcontinent-Asian American.

- **See:** National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC): nmsdc.org

- ***Certified Women-Owned Business (WOB/WBE/WOSB)***

A business that is at least 51% owned and operated by one or more women.

- **See:** Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC): wbenc.org

- ***Certified Veteran-Owned Business (VOSB)***

A business that is at least 51% owned and operated by one or more veterans.

- **See:** National Veteran Business Development Council (NVBDC): nvbdc.org

- ***Certified Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business (SDV/SDVOSB)***

A business that is at least 51% owned and operated by one or more service-disabled veterans.

- **See:** Disability:In: disabilityin.org

- ***Certified LGBTQ-Owned Business (LGBTQ)***

A business that is at least 51% owned and operated by one or more individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

- **See:** National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC): nglcc.org

Have more questions about Upwork's certification requirements?

Upwork requires our underrepresented suppliers to be certified. For more information about our certification requirements, read our [Inclusive Sourcing program FAQ page](#).