

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why should I get certified?

Being a certified woman business owner is a tool to increase your visibility and opportunities to help grow your business, as well as to increase equity and parity for women business owners in general. The government and large corporations are the largest buyers of goods and services and often award contracts specifically to women. NAWBO will start by focusing on corporations. These contracts can be constant, reliable sources of income. Certification also often comes with access to other important business opportunities like networking, mentoring, training and education, leads for bids and proposals and more. Therefore, if you sell a service or product and want to do business with larger corporations or government that has a diversity program, it is a differentiator.

Why is NAWBO certifying women business owners?

There are currently more than 12.3 million women-owned businesses in the United States who represent the fastest growing segment of the economy, and less than 2% are certified as WBE and/or MWBE. NAWBO is one of the original organizations that came together in 1975 to represent women business owners, when there was no existing support. Today, we are recognized as one of the most influential organizations with a national and international network of contacts and businesses. We also have extensive partnerships that include other respected certifying organizations. There is a tremendous need right now for certification, and NAWBO is positioned to step up and work together with these organizations in meeting this need.

Will NAWBO Certification have reciprocal acceptance with other organizations?

We will accept active WBE and/or MWBE certifications from other respected national organizations with certification processes that match ours, however, the expiration date will stay the same as that of your current valid certification. Meaning, if you have 6 months left on your current certification, it will only be valid for 6 months with NAWBO.

How will you compete with other respected certifying organizations' outreach services?

We do not want to compete with these organizations; we want to work hand-in-hand to get the millions of women businesses certified and then educated and prepared to utilize that certification to grow their business. The certification is a small step in this program's success. We plan on matching established women prime contractors to smaller businesses to foster an opportunity to partake in a contract without having to break the bank of that company. We additionally plan to utilize all of the NAWBO members who work within this space to provide continued support and education. We want to add value to and support any organization who supports women business owners in getting certified.

Other third parties offer WOSB certification too—how does this fit with NAWBO Certification?

The WOSB certification is solely to sell to the federal government and an organization has to be authorized by the Small Business Administration in order to offer it. We are offering WBE and MWBE certifications, which are recognized by corporations but not the federal government. Once our program is established and up and running, we will apply to the SBA to be an authorized WOSB certification provider.

Who will recognize NAWBO Certification?

NAWBO Certification exceeds the integrity and verification of the WBE and/or MWBE requirements as stated by the SBA. We expect any corporation that has a diversity program will accept NAWBO Certification, and are excited to go through the processes they have put in place in order for that to happen. We are also working on a list of strategic partners who will support and provide education for our certification program. If a corporation needs NAWBO's standards for verification, please contact certification@nawbo.org. We are not currently a third-party certifier for the SBA. We look to add this to our program offering by 2023.

How will NAWBO combat the challenge of some companies not accepting third-party certification?

We expect any company with a diversity program to take the time to understand NAWBO's gold standard of certification verification. NAWBO has been established since 1975, and we are one of the first and only organizations to represent women business owners. Our deep history and culture should speak for itself when a certified member presents a valid certification. We will utilize our relationships and reputation to continue to educate all corporations on how and why a valid certification is important to growing women's businesses.

How will NAWBO Certification be managed?

NAWBO Certification (and Re-Certification) will be managed under the NAWBO Institute. This is our C3 organization that was established to provide virtual training and education, private social communities and other online resources for women business owners. NAWBO Certification will now be part of the NAWBO Institute's offerings, and once women business owners are certified through the Institute, they will have access to certification-specific opportunities and resources to support their success in the long term.

What will the certification process be and how long will it take?

Our inclusive NAWBO Certification process is as follows:

- Applicant purchases “certification” event on website and pays
- Applicant receives email with secure, confidential link to application and instructions
- Company completes application and uploads documents, then emails Certification Manager when complete
- Certification Manager does a preliminary review to ensure all documents are complete and correct
- Certification Manager either assigns company to a Reviewer OR emails company to fix and resubmit documents
- Reviewer performs in-depth review of documents
- Reviewer either validates all documentation or reaches out to applicant to acquire needed details
- Reviewer conducts interview to verify eligibility
- Reviewer reports interview results to Certification Manager
- Certification Manager either sends certification package to the company OR informs the company they are not eligible

Our goal is to complete this process in the most-timely fashion possible from the time all required paperwork has been submitted by the company.

Is there a fee for certification?

Yes, the fee structure for NAWBO Certification is based on membership status and business size, and is as follows:

WBE/MWBE Certification – NAWBO member – over \$1M revenue - \$500 fee

WBE/MWBE Certification – non-member – over \$1M revenue - \$900 fee

WBE/MWBE Certification – NAWBO member – under \$1M revenue - \$350 fee

WBE/MWBE Certification – non-member – under \$1M revenue - \$750 fee

NOTE: Applicants will have 3 business days following their date of registration to cancel their registration and receive a full refund; after the 3 business days, they will be subject to a nonrefundable application fee of \$150. Also, note that that this one application fee applies to multiple businesses owned and operated by the same woman business owner.

What are the minimum requirements?

WBE/MWBE Certification requirements include:

- At least 51% unconditionally and directly owned by women who are U.S. citizens or have permanent legal residence
- The woman must manage the day-to-day operations
- The woman must make the long-term decisions for the business
- The woman must hold the highest officer position in the company
- This woman must work at business full-time during normal working hours
- The business must be operational for 2 years or more

Will you allow franchise owners to get certified through your program?

Yes, however, they will need to provide clear documentation that they have provided capital to start and run the business with an independent bank account, as well as control over daily activities, hiring, firing, etc.

What does it mean to be part of the beta test?

The diverse team behind NAWBO Certification, including several long-time certified women business owners, has worked long and hard to bring this offering to women business owners through the NAWBO Institute. We decided to begin with 100 because we felt we could reasonably manage this with current staffing levels and to get proper feedback from during the beta process. While we expect a smooth launch and process to serve our first 100 women business owners who are ready to be certified, we know there are lessons to be learned in everything. Being part of the beta test phase just means that we ask for your patience and feedback as we serve you in this new and exciting way. Together, we will perfect the NAWBO Certification process for all future women business owners who are ready to take this next step for their businesses.

What if I am not in the first 100?

Once the first 100 women business owners who are ready to be certified (or re-certified) have registered for NAWBO Certification through our website, we will start an interest list for those who would like to be next in line for NAWBO Certification for their businesses. As soon as we are ready to serve you, you will receive an email with details for getting started. However, we understand if your certification need is more urgent and you choose to go with another certifying organization. We have provided a list of resources on the NAWBO Certification landing page to support you.

HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS? WE MAY ALREADY HAVE THE ANSWERS.

Please visit the NAWBO Certification landing page at <https://www.nawbo.org/events/power-your-business-wbe-certification>. If you still have questions, please email us at Certification@nawbo.org.