

CERTIFIED ECONOMIC INCLUSION OFFICER (CEIO) CERTIFICATION

POLICIES GOVERNING APPLICATION, EXAMINATION, AND AWARD OF CERTIFICATION

*Administered by the North Carolina Minority and Women Business Enterprise Coordinators' Network
and UNC School of Government*

Effective Date: December 18, 2020

I. Introduction

The North Carolina Minority and Women Business Enterprise Coordinators' Network (the "Network") offers a voluntary certification program for public supplier diversity professionals. Through this program, professionals will have an opportunity to earn and maintain designation as a Certified Economic Inclusion Officer ("CEIO"). The UNC School of Government will assist the Network in certain aspects of administering the CEIO certification.

The mission of the CEIO certification is to develop public supplier diversity professionals skilled in the compliance and administration of HUB / MWBE / DBE programs.

The goals of the CEIO certification are to:

(1) enhance service delivery of public supplier diversity programs through training and development of diversity professionals;

(2) recognize achievement of an established level of competency and proficiency among professionals; and

(3) provide continuing professional development of professionals and enhance their professional image.

Credentialed professionals shall be distinguished by knowledge, skills, and abilities in the following fields:

(1) MWBE, HUB, and DBE Compliance;

(2) Program Development and Administration;

(3) Public Purchasing;

(4) Communication and Advocacy; and

(5) Economic Development.

II. CEIO Certification Committee and Policies

The Network will create the CEIO Certification Committee (the "Committee") pursuant to Article Twelve, Section One of the Bylaws of the Network. Prior to the establishment of the Committee, the Network has created a Task Force to assist in the creation of these Policies Governing Application, Examination and Award of Certification (the "Policies"). The Task Force shall be responsible for administering the CEIO program until the first class of applicants receives CEIO certification in 2021.

After the first class of applicants achieves CEIO certification, the Committee shall be responsible for administering the CEIO program with assistance from the UNC School of Government. The School of Government faculty member working primarily in the field of public procurement shall serve as a permanent member of the Committee.

The Committee's primary functions are to establish certification requirements for the CEIO program and make certification award determinations. An award of certification is made in the sole discretion of the Committee. All decisions by the Committee shall be final and not subject to appeal or review. In addition to these Policies, the Committee is authorized to promulgate any forms, guidelines, policies, or procedures it deems necessary to effectively administer the CEIO Program.

III. Summary of Requirements for CEIO Certification and Categories of Certification

Section III of these Policies summarizes requirements for (i) initial certification, (ii) recertification, and (iii) lifetime certification. In the event of a conflict between the summary of requirements contained in this Section III and the requirements set forth in Sections IV (initial certification), V (recertification), VI (lifetime certification), or VII (reinstatement) of these Policies, Sections IV-VII shall govern.

- a. ***Initial Certification.*** To be eligible for initial certification, an applicant must:
 - i. Be a member in good standing of the Network at the time that the applicant submits his or her application;
 - ii. Have at least two years of experience in the Public Supplier Diversity Profession (as defined in Section IV.c.4 hereof).
 - iii. Complete three core courses taught at the UNC School of Government;
 - iv. Attend at least one Network Annual conference;
 - v. Pass all sections of the CEIO certification examination administered by the UNC School of Government; and
 - vi. Earn 100 certification points.
- b. ***Recertification.*** Once awarded, CEIO certification may be renewed every five years. To be eligible for recertification, an applicant must:
 - i. Be a member in good standing of the Network at the time the applicant submits his or her application for recertification; and
 - ii. Earn 50 certification points.
- c. ***Lifetime Certification.*** Individuals who have obtained the CEIO certification are eligible for lifetime certification in *either* of the following situations:
 - i. Having attained the age of 55 with 15 or more years of experience in equal business opportunity programming; or
 - ii. Regardless of age, with 20 or more years of experience in the Public Supplier Diversity Profession (as defined in Section IV.c.4 hereof).

IV. Examination and Initial Certification Requirements

- a. ***Application Deadline.*** Applicants ordinarily must submit an application for certification by October 1 each year, but **applications for the first class of CEIO certifications must**

be submitted by March 31, 2021, but the Task Force reserves the right to extend the deadline in its sole discretion. The Task Force anticipates that the initial exam for CEIO certification shall be held on April 24, 2021.

- b. ***Eligibility Requirements for Examination.*** Individuals pursuing CEIO certification must meet all of the requirements contained in this Section IV.b to sit for the CEIO examination.
 - i. Network Membership. An applicant must be a member in good standing of the Network at the time that the applicant submits his or her application to sit for the CEIO examination.
 - ii. Completion of Core Courses. An applicant must successfully complete each of the following courses offered by the UNC School of Government: (1) Basic Principles of Local Government Purchasing; (2) Contracting for Construction and Design Services; and (3) Minority Participation Programs and Public Contracting. The School of Government anticipates that the Minority Participation Programs course will be held in March 2021, and will be offered in a virtual format.
- c. ***Eligibility Requirements for Certification.*** Individuals pursuing CEIO certification must meet all of the requirements contained in this Section IV.c to be eligible for CEIO certification.
 - i. Previous Requirements and Timing. An applicant for certification must satisfy all requirements stated in Section IV.b above. If an applicant is eligible to sit for the examination, but will satisfy the remaining certification requirements (e.g., professional experience) *after* the exam, the applicant must submit evidence of satisfying the remaining requirements to the Committee to achieve certification. The Committee shall attempt to meet quarterly to review documentation submitted by these applicants, and all certifications, if awarded, shall be effective as of November 1 in the calendar year in which certification is awarded.
 - ii. Examination. Applicants for certification must successfully pass all sections of an examination administered by the UNC School of Government. The examination shall consist of two sections: (1) multiple-choice questions related to North Carolina law (knowledge of HUB certification requirements, HUB participation goal-setting, good faith efforts of HUB solicitation; HUB reporting requirements, application of HUB solicitation requirements to alternative construction delivery methods) and federal law (knowledge of M/WBE solicitation requirements in the Uniform Guidance (2 C.F.R. Part 200); knowledge of DBE requirements contained in 45 C.F.R. Part 26 associated with use of U.S. DOT funds; knowledge of constitutional limitations related to HUB and M/WBE contracting) ; and (2) free-response questions focused on (a) communication and advocacy for the use of minority and women-owned businesses in governmental procurement, and (b) the role and future of the Public Supplier Diversity Profession in building the capacity of minority and women-owned businesses.

Three hours shall be allowed for completing the examination. The examination ordinarily shall be offered once per year in conjunction with the Network's November conference, but the Task Force or Committee, as applicable, shall retain the ability to offer additional examinations each year in its sole discretion. A retake examination shall be offered once, at least 90 days after the date of the initial examination. Any examination may, at the discretion of the School of Government faculty member responsible for administering the exam but in consultation with the Committee, be offered in a virtual format.

Applicants must achieve a score of at least 80% on each section in order to pass the entire examination. An applicant who does not achieve a passing score on any one or more sections of the examination is only required to retake the failed section(s). Upon achieving a score of at least 80% on both sections, including in a retake examination (whether at an initial examination or a retake examination), the applicant shall be deemed to have passed the full examination.

- iii. Network Conference Attendance. An applicant must attend one annual Network conference in order to receive CEIO certification; provided, however, that the applicant may satisfy this requirement by attending the Network conference at which an applicant takes the CEIO examination.
- iv. Professional Experience. An applicant must demonstrate at least **two years** of experience in the Public Supplier Diversity Profession, and the Committee shall have discretion to determine whether such years of experience are recent enough to merit the award of CEIO certification. As used in these Policies, "Public Supplier Diversity Profession" shall include (i) employment by a political subdivision or other public body at the local, state, or federal levels in the United States in a position reasonably related to the public supplier diversity profession (including, without limitation, a purchasing officer, project manager, MWBE coordinator, DEI professional, or diversity professional), and (ii) employment by a private entity in a position directly related to sales of personal property, services, or construction and repair services and reasonably related to the promotion of diversity in connection with such sales to a political subdivision or other public body at the local, state, or federal levels in the United States. The applicant must submit with his or her application a statement from the applicant's employer or, if the applicant has worked for multiple employers in the Public Supplier Diversity Profession, from each such employer. An applicant's professional title shall not be dispositive of an applicant's participation in the Public Supplier Diversity Profession. Instead, each applicant must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Task Force or the Committee, as applicable, that the applicant's substantive duties have included participation in the Public Supplier Diversity Profession.
- v. Certification Points and Documentation. **An applicant must earn 100 certification points to achieve CEIO certification.** Applicants may earn such points in three categories: (i) Professional Education (detailed in Section IV.c.v.1 below); (2) Higher Education Degrees (detailed in Section IV.c.v.2 below); and (3) Service to the Network (detailed in Section IV.c.v.3 below). Points earned in

excess of the 100 points required for initial certification shall not be credited for a subsequent recertification cycle. The Committee reserves the right to determine whether the items listed by an applicant shall be credited towards an applicant's required certification points.

1. Professional Education. An applicant may earn up to 75 certification points for completion of professional education programs specified herein, but **must earn a minimum number of points specified in each core competency of professional education specified below**. 1 point shall be awarded for 1 hour of professional education instruction (excluding non-instructional components of a program (e.g., breaks, meals, receptions, and vendor shows)). Applicants must submit documentation verifying completion of all professional education for which points are sought. If professional education is obtained through an institution (e.g., a professional purchasing organization or university), the applicant must submit an official transcript indicating completion of the professional education for which points are sought. If such a transcript is unavailable, the applicant must submit a letter (e-mail being sufficient) from the organization providing professional education, indicating that the applicant has completed the relevant course. Assuming verification of attendance and completion is possible, credit for virtual instruction may be given by the Committee.
 - a. Core Competencies. An applicant **must** obtain professional education instruction in the hours specified in this subsection: (1) MWBE / HUB Program Development and Administration; (2) Compliance; (3) Communication and Advocacy; and (4) Economic Development. Courses may be taken from the organizations specified in Section IV.c.v.1.b below. **Applicants seeking to fulfill the core requirements are encouraged to attend courses provided by the Network and the UNC School of Government, as well as classes provided by the American Contract Compliance National Training Institute or Institute of Supply Management.**
 - i. MWBE / HUB / DBE Program Development and Administration. **An applicant must obtain 25 points in this professional education category.** Courses in this category shall be related to building and administering successful MWBE, HUB, and DBE outreach programs. Course content may include topics such as MWBE / HUB participation goal setting, project management, outreach, HUB certification, conducting and understanding disparity studies, or developing specific skills or knowledge relevant to provide assistance to MWBE / HUB firms. Course content related to connecting MWBE / HUB firms with general business opportunities shall not qualify. Course content relating to administration of DBE

programs required in connection with the use of U.S. DOT funding will be accepted.

- ii. Compliance. **An applicant must obtain 25 points in this professional education category.** Courses in this category relate to the legal requirements (federal and North Carolina) for MWBE and HUB contracting programs. Course content may include procurement law topics and MWBE / HUB / DBE laws and regulations (federal and North Carolina).
- iii. Communication and Advocacy. **An applicant must obtain 10 points in this professional education category.** Courses related to public speaking, marketing, maintaining supplier relationships, and leadership shall qualify as meeting this core competency.
- iv. Economic Development. **An applicant must obtain 10 points in this professional education category.** Courses that allow participants to understand and apply economic development principles shall qualify.

b. Organizations Providing Professional Education.

- i. Diverse Business Advocacy Organizations. Courses held or sponsored by established professional purchasing organizations (including, without limitation, the Network, the American Contract Compliance Association, the Hispanic Contractors Association, the Women's Business Center, the NC Institute for Minority Economic Development, the Carolinas-Virginia Minority Supplier Diversity Council and the National Minority Supplier Development Council), or by a public institution or public agency (local, state, or federal) will be accepted. Applicants may receive credit for one exam review session prior to initial certification.
- ii. UNC School of Government Courses. Conferences and courses sponsored by the UNC School of Government will be accepted. No certification points shall be awarded for completion of the School's core courses specified in Section IV.b.ii above.
- iii. State Division of Purchase and Contract (including Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses). Applicants may receive credit for courses offered by the N.C. Department of Administration, Division of Purchase and

Contract or the Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses.

- iv. Community College and University. Applicants may receive credit for courses held by a community college, college, or university which are not part of a degree program for which an applicant receives credit pursuant to Section IV.b.v.2.
2. Higher Education Degrees. An applicant may earn up to 10 certification points for the completion of the Higher Education Degrees specified herein. To receive points, applicants must submit proof of degree award (a copy of a diploma or official institutional transcript) with their application.
 - a. Bachelor's Degrees. 5 certification points may be awarded for a bachelor's degree in any academic discipline relevant to the Public Supplier Diversity Profession, including, without limitation, procurement and purchasing, supply chain management, construction management, business administration, economic development, communications, or related degrees..
 - b. Graduate Degrees. 5 certification points will be awarded for a master's or other advanced degree, including, without limitation, procurement and purchasing, supply chain management, construction management, business administration, economic development, communications, or related degrees..
 3. Service to the Network. An applicant may earn up to 5 certification points for service to the Network. No more than 5 points per calendar year may be awarded for service to the Network. Points for "Service to the Network" shall be awarded as follows.
 - a. Network Board Membership. One point shall be awarded.
 - b. Service as Instructor. One point per course shall be awarded for serving as an instructor for any SOG core course, Network conference, or Network training; provided, however, that points shall not be awarded for instructing at a training conducted by the applicant's unit of government or private employer.
 - c. Service as Committee Chair. One point shall be awarded for chairing a Network committee established by the Network board.
 - d. Service as Network Committee Member. One-half of one point shall be awarded for serving as a member of a Network committee established by the Network board; provided, however, that the applicant must

provide a statement from the committee chair documenting the applicant's active service on the committee.

4. **Professional Experience.** An applicant may earn up to 10 certification points for experience in the Public Supplier Diversity Profession. One year of experience in the Public Supplier Diversity Profession shall equal one certification point.

- d. ***Effective Date of Initial Certification.*** Applicants for initial certification who have met all requirements contained in this Section IV shall be awarded certification effective as of November 1 in the calendar year in which certification is awarded and shall be effective from a period of five calendar years.

V. **Recertification Requirements**

Individuals who have achieved initial certification or recertification pursuant to this Section are eligible for recertification at the end of the five year period of initial certification or recertification, as the case may be. Recertification shall be effective for a period of five calendar years, beginning November 1 of the calendar year in which recertification is awarded. To be eligible for recertification, the candidate must meet the requirements specified in this Section V.

- a. ***Application Deadline.*** Candidates must submit an application for recertification by October 1 in the calendar year in which the individual's CEIO certification expires. If an individual fails to submit such application by the deadline or the individual's certification otherwise has expired, the individual must meet the requirements set forth in Section IV to have his or her certification reinstated.
- b. ***Qualifications for Recertification.*** Individuals pursuing CEIO recertification must (i) be a member in good standing of the Network at the time that their application for recertification is submitted, and (ii) earn 50 certification points in accordance with Section V.c below.
- c. ***Points for Recertification.*** Points for recertification shall be earned in the same manner as specified in Section IV.b.v above; provided that no points shall be awarded for any professional education, higher education, or service to the Network if the candidate has received certification points for such items in a previous certification or recertification cycle.

VI. **Lifetime Certification Requirements**

To be eligible for lifetime certification, the candidate must meet the requirements specified in this Section VI. Lifetime certification shall be effective on November 1 of the calendar year in which lifetime certification is awarded.

- a. ***Application Deadline.*** Candidates must submit an application for lifetime certification by October 1 in the calendar year in which the qualifies for lifetime certification. For example, if an applicant will achieve 20 years' experience in the Public Supplier Diversity Profession in May 2021, the applicant may apply by October 1, 2020. The applicant also may apply for lifetime certification in 2021 or any year thereafter.

- b. ***Qualifications for Lifetime Certification.*** Individuals who have obtained initial CEIO certification and maintained continuous certification are eligible for lifetime certification when the applicant meets either of the following criteria: (1) having attained the age of 55 with 15 more years of experience in the Public Supplier Diversity Profession; or (2) regardless of age, with 20 or more years of experience in the Public Supplier Diversity Profession. If an individual achieves initial certification and subsequently qualifies for lifetime certification prior to completing any recertification under Section V, the individual need not obtain recertification prior to obtaining lifetime certification.

VII. Expired CEIO Certification; Reinstatement

If an individual's certification has expired and the individual desires to seek reinstatement, the individual must: (i) submit an application for reinstatement by October 1 of the calendar year immediately preceding the Network conference at which a certification exam shall be administered; (ii) be a member of the Network in good standing at the time that the application is submitted; and (iii) take the certification exam achieve a passing score of 80% or better on such exam. If the applicant meets such conditions, the individual's certification shall be reinstated for a period of one year, after which the individual may apply for recertification in accordance with Section VI hereof.

VIII. Application Forms and Supporting Documentation

Applications for initial certification, recertification, or lifetime certification shall be made available on the School of Government's Local Government Purchasing and Contracting website (www.ncpurchasing.unc.edu) and the Network's website (mwbenetwork.org). Any applicant seeking reinstatement shall contact ceio@mwbecoordinators.org for further instructions.

Applications must be submitted electronically in PDF format to (i) Connor Crews, Assistant Professor of Public Law and Government, UNC School of Government at ccrews@sog.unc.edu, **and** (ii) ceio@mwbecoordinators.org. Applicants must compile all application information into a single PDF, with application form appearing first, followed by all required supporting documentation. The Committee reserves the right to reject any application that does not comply with this requirement or fails to provide sufficient supporting documentation. Without limitation, supporting documentation shall be insufficient when it fails to indicate the number of actual classroom instruction hours, when it is illegible, or does not adequately explain the points for which credit is sought.

IX. Amendment of Policies and Authority of Task Force and Committee

These Policies are subject to amendment by the Task Force, Committee, or the UNC School of Government at any time, with or without notice to applicants.