

Certification and Supportive Services During COVID-19

The pandemic impacted operations in areas of home, work and business for everyone. EOD's Certification and Supportive Service areas were no exceptions.

Fortunately, we were ahead of the curve when it came to working remotely. By transitioning our certification processes to an electronic format, back in 2016, all DBE materials and resources required to process applications and handle DBE-related matters remained totally accessible. Working remotely for the team was not new concept and didn't require any periods of special adaptability.

In March, US DOT's Departmental Office of Civil Rights provided guidance to certifying agencies to meet the mission of the program, while promoting safety and protection for all stakeholders. The guidance covered topics such as: On-Site Visits, Interstate Certification, Decertification Hearings, Summary Suspensions and Appeal Instructions and Recipient Records.

In light of COVID-19, we have been using applications such as MicroSoft Teams, FaceTime and Skyppe to conduct certification committee meetings, interview firm owners, take virtual tours of office space, equipment and job sites. Our processing times remain well within the programs standards.

COVID-19 interrupted the final session of Entrepreneurship Development Institute's ("EDI") 2020 training. As a result, since April, a series of webinars have been developed and provided by CEI, our DBE Supportive Services consultant, to continue the learning series for our DBEs.

Supportive Services has consistently communicated economic disaster relief resources to the DBE community immediately as information became available. They also published a newsletter in June, in collaboration with our XBE partners, as another tool to inform our DBE community of resources available.