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Baker-Polito Administration Announces New Opportunities for Veteran-Owned Businesses

New supplier diversity certification for veteran business owners streamlines process, reduces wait times

FOXBOROUGH – Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito today announced a new Massachusetts Veteran Certification program and outreach process to reduce federal certification wait times, increase the participation of veteran and service-disabled veteran business owners in the Commonwealth’s supplier diversity program for goods and services’ contracts, and foster growth, competition and economic development opportunities for veteran-owned firms in Massachusetts.

“As our veterans return to create businesses and job opportunities for others, this process will improve their ability to compete for state and local contracts,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “We are proud to support our servicemen and women and their families for the sacrifices they have made, and for the continued contributions they make to economic development and their communities at home.”

The announcement follows the Baker-Polito Administration’s supplier diversity enhancements and expansion opportunities for veteran, LGBT, disability, diverse and small business entities announced in November, which included expanding the service-disabled veteran-owned business category of the Supplier Diversity Program to include all veterans, under an existing benchmark of 3%. While the administration will continue to employ cross-certification of veteran and service-disabled veteran
businesses from partners like VetBiz and the U.S. Business Leadership Network, the state certification will significantly reduce the length of wait times veteran-owned businesses have experienced through the VetBiz process.

“By improving the way our military men and women can contract with the Commonwealth, Massachusetts is sending a powerful statement to encourage entrepreneurship and advancement for hundreds of veteran business owners,” said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.

The Massachusetts Veteran Certification program was announced today at the Commonwealth’s 18th annual MASSBUYS EXPO in Foxborough, a 100% exhibitor-funded, two-day event convening nearly 3,000 businesses and public purchasing and procurement officials from state and local government, non-profits and educational institutions. The MASSBUYS EXPO is the largest business to government event of its kind in New England. This year's MASSBUYS EXPO includes the first Supplier Diversity Networking Event, which allows small and diverse businesses that are certified by the Supplier Diversity Office (SDO) to network with MASSBUYS attendees and exhibitors.

Veteran certification by the Commonwealth will begin on May 1 for all Massachusetts-based businesses, June 1 for New England based businesses and July 1 for firms in other states.

“Establishing a veteran-owned business certification program is a testament to the administration’s support for increasing the participation of veteran entrepreneurs in the Commonwealth,” said Veterans Services Secretary Francisco Ureña. “I thank Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito for their leadership and for championing our veterans and enhancing opportunities for their employment and success.”

The development and implementation of the Massachusetts Veteran Certification program is supported in part by a $20,000 Diversity Goal and Business Technical Assistance Grant Opportunity awarded by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission.

“MGC is proud to support the SDO’s initiative to establish a certification and outreach program for veteran-owned businesses with the issuance of a $20,000 grant from MGC’s newly established Diversity Goal and Business Technical Assistance Grant Program,” said Jill Griffin, Director of Workforce, Supplier and Diversity Development for the Massachusetts Gaming Commission. “An expedited certification for veteran business enterprises coupled with outreach and training programs will greatly assist in fulfilling the legislative mandate to ensure that the gaming industry in Massachusetts is inclusive and provides opportunities that reflect the diversity of the Commonwealth.”
The Baker-Polito Administration also initiated a bi-annual Supplier Diversity Regional Series in the fall of 2015, led by the Governor’s Office of Access and Opportunity (OAO), Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD), the Operational Services Division (OSD) and OSD’S Supplier Diversity Office to increase engagement and marketplace opportunities for small and diverse business enterprises with procurement officials in state and local government, educational institutions, medical facilities and the private sector. The inaugural series hosted over 800 attendees.

In February, 2015, Governor Baker signed Executive Order No. 559, elevating the Office of Access and Opportunity to the Governor’s Office under the direction of a Deputy Chief of Staff to further the administration’s priority of increasing diversity and inclusion within state government employment and procurement. The Executive Order also established a cross-administration Steering Committee for Access and Opportunity to coordinate best practices.