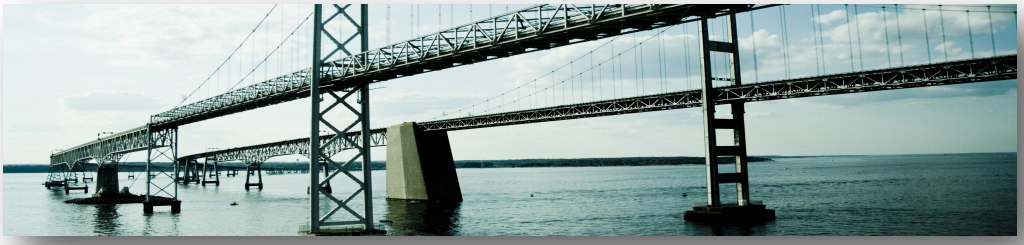
MARYLAND

Maryland Department of Transportation



2016 MBE Disparity Study FAQs

The State of Maryland and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) are conducting a Disparity Study for Maryland's Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Program for contracting and procurement. To determine whether this program remains legally defensible and administratively successful, the State and MDOT have undertaken this Study to gather and analyze the type of evidence required by federal courts.

What is a "Disparity Study"?

A Disparity Study gathers evidence to determine whether the State has a strong basis for implementing race- and gender-conscious contracting policies. This includes statistical evidence of disparities between MBE availability and utilization on State contracts and subcontracts, and within the Maryland-area economy as a whole, as well as evidence regarding the factors necessary for business success, such as access to business capital, formal and informal business networks, and suppliers. The Study will also gather qualitative information directly from business owners regarding their experiences with discrimination as well as their everyday challenges and successes doing business in the Maryland market area. Additionally, the Study will evaluate the State's current MBE Program and related policies and make recommendations for future initiatives and enhancements.

Who is conducting the Disparity Study?

NERA Economic Consulting was awarded the contract for this Study after a competitive process. The NERA team is led by Senior Vice President Dr. Jon Wainwright, a leading national expert on disparity studies. The NERA team is proud to include four MBE firms—SRB Communications, CR Dynamics & Associates Inc., 1st Choice LLC, the Law Office of Don T. O'Bannon—as well as one veteran-owned firm—CVV Transcripts and one non-MBE small business—J&D Data Services.

What if I don't receive a survey or can't attend a business interview session?

We welcome your comments by email at **DisparityStudy@NERA.com**. Comments will be accepted throughout the course of the Study.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

At **NERA Economic Consulting**: 888-608-(NERA) 6372, **BusinessInterviews@nera.com**.
At the **State of Maryland**: Tracie Watkins-Rhodes, Director of Administration & Coordination for Minority & Small Business Programs, Maryland Department of Transportation, 410-865-1120, **TRhodes@mdot.state.md.us**.

HOW CAN BUSINESS OWNERS GET INVOLVED?

The participation of business owners is crucial to the Disparity Study's success. Interested business owners can be part of the process in two ways:

BUSINESS OWNER INTERVIEWS:

NERA will be conducting interviews with business owners to gather information on their experiences and insights. Invitations will be sent to all identifiable firms that have done business or expressed interest in doing business with the State. Invitations will also be sent to area business and trade associations. The interviews will be held at various locations throughout the State from March 22 - April 21, 2016. Since space is limited, it is important to login and register at: https://interviews.nera.com/.

MAIL/WEB SURVEYS:

If you receive a survey, please complete it online or return it by mail. This short survey will be sent to a cross-section of area businesses. Since the survey period will be open for a limited time, please complete and return it as soon as possible. The survey schedule is TBD.