

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development Launches DBE Interim Final Rule (IFR) Narrative Questionnaire for Certification Applicants

Baton Rouge, La. – The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), through its Compliance Programs Section, announces the launch of the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Interim Final Rule (IFR) Narrative Questionnaire, a new requirement for firms seeking certification or re-certification under federal DBE and Airport Concessions DBE (ACDBE) programs.

DOTD serves as the lead agency for the Louisiana Unified Certification Program (LAUCP), which also includes Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport and the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority. The LAUCP is responsible for administering the certification process for DBE and ACDBE firms that participate in U.S. Department of Transportation-assisted contracts across Louisiana.

The newly issued IFR Narrative Questionnaire implements changes required under 49 CFR Parts 26 and 23, which govern the DBE and ACDBE programs for federal-aid highway, transit, and airport concessions financial assistance. The IFR removes prior race- and sex-based presumptions of disadvantage and now requires all applicants to provide individualized evidence of social and economic disadvantage as part of the certification process.

Under the updated federal regulations:

- 49 CFR Part 26 governs the DBE program for federal-aid highway and transit financial assistance.
- 49 CFR Part 23 governs the ACDBE program.
- The IFR revises the definitions in 49 CFR § 26.5 and certification standards in 49 CFR § 26.67, requiring applicants to demonstrate disadvantage on a case-by-case basis through documented evidence.
- The regulatory changes became effective immediately upon publication on October 3, 2025.

To comply with these federal updates, the LAUCP Narrative Questionnaire has been developed to help applicants describe and document barriers they have experienced in accessing business and economic opportunities. The questionnaire includes instructions and three required narrative sections:

1. Education and Training Barriers
2. Entrepreneurship and Business Financial Opportunity Barriers
3. Societal, Environmental, and Community Barriers

The narrative responses allow applicants to provide personal accounts and supporting information that demonstrate how social and economic disadvantage has affected their ability to compete in the marketplace.

As part of the implementation process, IFR Narrative forms will be issued to DBE firms currently listed in the LAUCP database that have expressed interest in being reevaluated for recertification under the updated federal rules. Firms are encouraged to complete and return the IFR Narrative Questionnaire as soon as possible to their respective certifying agency to avoid delays in the re-certification process.

Firms with questions about the IFR Narrative Questionnaire or the certification process should contact their certifying agency within the LAUCP for guidance and additional information.

The DOTD Compliance Programs Section remains committed to ensuring that Louisiana's DBE and ACDBE programs are administered in accordance with federal regulations while maintaining fair and equitable opportunities for small and disadvantaged businesses participating in transportation-related contracting.

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