CPUC Utility Supplier Diversity Program

Helping Diverse Businesses Sell to Utilities

The California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) General Order (GO) 156 encourages investor-owned utilities and their prime contractors to purchase at least 21.5% of goods and services from women; minority; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT); and disabled veteran owned businesses. Currently, more than 30 investor-owned utilities such as AT&T, California Water Association, Comcast, Frontier, PG&E, SDG&E, Southern California Edison, SoCalGas, and Verizon participate in this program. In October 2019, Senate Bill (SB) 255 (Bradford, Chapter 407, 2019) added Community Choice Aggregators, energy service providers, distributed energy resource contractors, and energy storage system companies.

Getting Started – Get Certified

Businesses must be certified to participate in the Utility Supplier Diversity Program.

If your business is at least 51 percent owned by one or more women, minorities, or LGBT individuals whose management and daily business operations are controlled by one of those individuals, apply to the CPUC's third-party certifier and get certified for free:

The Supplier Clearinghouse
10100 Pioneer Blvd, Suite 103
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
Toll Free: (800) 359-7998
Los Angeles Area Phone: (562) 325-8685
Fax: (562) 278-0153 and (888) 549-3803
E-mail: info@thesupplierclearinghouse.com
Website: www.thesupplierclearinghouse.com

Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses:

Office of Small Business & Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Services Department of General Services, Procurement Division
707 3rd Street
West Sacramento, CA 95605
Phone: 916-375-4940
Email: OSDSHelp@dgs.ca.gov
www.caleprocure.ca.gov/pages/sbdvbe-index.aspx

Comparable certifying agencies accepted by the Supplier Clearinghouse:

- The National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC)
- The Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)
- National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC)
- The United States Small Business Administration (SBA)

Qualified applicants enter a supplier database accessedby participating utilities, their prime contractors, and other businesses: https://sch.thesupplierclearinghouse.com/FrontEnd/SearchCertifiedDirectory.asp.

Certification is valid for three years except for the certifications from the comparable certifying agencies. These certifications are valid for the duration they are current with the comparable certifying agency.

Note: certification and inclusion in the database does not guarantee business with utilities. For more information on CPUC's Utility Supplier Diversity Program, please visit www.cpuc.ca.gov/supplierdiversity.

California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-703-2782
800-848-5580 (Toll Free)
cpuc.ca.gov

Once Certified – **Dos**:

Identify and research the utilities you are interested in working with.

- Does the utility buy the products/services you provide?
- Does your business offer a solution to the utility?
- How can your business add value to the utility?
- How does the utility procure products/services?
- What are the utility's buying cycles and strategies?
- Who are the utility's prime contractors for subcontracting opportunities?
- Who are the businesses already working with the utility?
- Who are your business competitors in the market you are in?

Register your business in the utilities' supplier database portals and update your business profile, at least, annually.

Build relationships.

- Be proactive.
- Build your network.
- Attend events your target utility hosts, sponsors, or participates in.
- Prepare well before networking or meeting the utilities.
- Research common grounds with the utilities for engaging conversations.
- Find speaking engagement opportunities for strategic business presentations.
- Develop a professional "Follow-up" system.
- Ask for referrals.
- Network with other compatible businesses for partnerships, referrals, information on best practices, etc.
- Work proactively with affinity groups and trade organizations.

Market your business.

- Develop a marketing strategy focused on sharing solutions.
- Attend business events.
- Connect with the utilities' supplier diversity representatives.
- Articulate the value of your business succinctly verbally and in all marketing materials.
- Be visible, especially to your target utilities.
- Develop a business website that is easy to navigate and has current information.
- Use technologies such as social media and video marketing.
- Maintain a current certification status.

Bid on contracts.

- Respond to all bid questions and provide all required documents.
- Check for clerical and grammatical errors.
- Be different.
- Be persistent but patient.
- Partner with other businesses to increase your business competitiveness.

Once Certified – **Don'ts**:

- Use CPUC as a marketing agent.
- Work individually.
- Set unreasonable expectations.
- Meet utilities without preparation.
- Be overly persistent.

Typical Bid Selection Criteria

- Responsiveness to request for proposals.
- Competitive pricing and values added capabilities.
- Good references and financial stability.
- Core competency in the supplier's line of business.
- Quality processes.
- Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and E-Commerce functionality.
- Clean Occupational Safety and Health Records.
- Certification by diversity or small business organization.

Note: CPUC does not engage in the utilities' bid selection process and general contract-related disputes.

CPUC Utility Supplier Contacts

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Utility Supplier Diversity Contacts

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