



Small Business Strong

Presented by Tamela Saldaña, Ph.D.
Austin Small and Minority Business Resources | February 2026

Agenda



- Objectives
- Overview of Federal, State and Local Changes
- What is the City of Austin doing?
 - Austin Small and Minority Business Resources
 - Austin Economic Development
 - Austin Financial Services
- Share your feedback

Our Vision

Empowering small businesses to thrive in Austin's economy by delivering premier customized service

Objectives



- Inform the public of the recent changes to the federal Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE)/Airport Concessions Disadvantage Business Enterprise (ACDBE) Programs, the State of Texas HUB Program, and other local small and minority programs.
- Provide an overview of the City of Austin's programs and resources that support small and minority owned businesses.
- Engage the public to receive input to enhance the offerings provided by the City of Austin to support the Austin small businesses community.
- Provide an opportunity for Q&A related to business resources and services.

Overview of Federal, State, and Local Program Changes

What is the IFR?



On October 3, 2025, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) issued an Interim Final Rule (IFR) impacting the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and Airport Concessions Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE) Programs.

The IFR does the following:

- **Removes race-and sex-based presumptions** of social and economic disadvantage from the DBE and ACDBE Programs.
- **Requires certification re-evaluation of firms** to demonstrate social and economic disadvantage based on individual experience and circumstances.
- **Pauses certain compliance requirements/functions until certification re-evaluation is complete for state Unified Certification Programs.**

IFR link: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/10/03/2025-19460/disadvantaged-business-enterprise-program-and-disadvantaged-business-enterprise-in-airport>

What is the TX Comptroller's Emergency Rule?

- The State of Texas Comptroller issued an Emergency Rule on December 2, 2025 impacting the Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB) and was officially published in the Texas Register on December 12, 2025, that:
 - **Removes race-and sex-based presumptions** related to the State of Texas Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Program and **reclassify the program to serve small businesses owned by service-disabled veterans**, regardless of their race, sex, or ethnicity.
 - The Comptroller redesignated program as the **Veteran Heroes United in Business, or VetHUB Program**
 - HUBs that are currently certified will retain their certification until the **Comptroller's Office reviews eligibility** for the VetHUB Program.

<https://www.sos.state.tx.us/texreg/archive/December122025/Emergency%20Rules/34.PUBLIC%20FINANCE.html#3>

Other Texas Local M/WBE Program Changes



City of Fort Worth

August 2025, **Fort Worth** City Council voted to **suspend all Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Minority and Women Business Enterprise (MWBE) programs** in response to new federal directives.

In its place, Fort Worth will implement a Small Business Development program that removes race and gender based criteria .

City of San Antonio

November 2025, the **City of San Antonio removed M/WBE contracting goal** requirements.

The initial rule required companies contracting with the City of San Antonio to subcontract as much as 40% of work to minority and woman-owned businesses.

City of Houston

The City of Houston will still have ethnic categories but created a cap level based on availability in the marketplace.

The City of Houston is also a member of the Texas Unified Certification program and must comply with recent IFR.

**What is the
City of Austin doing?**

Small Business Strong

City of Austin's Commitment

- ✓ Austin cultivates a resilient local economy that prioritizes small businesses.
- ✓ The City of Austin provides the development assistance, resources, technical expertise necessary to empower economic mobility and opportunities that promote growth.
- ✓ This commitment guarantees that all businesses have a fair opportunity to compete for City contracts and subcontracting roles.

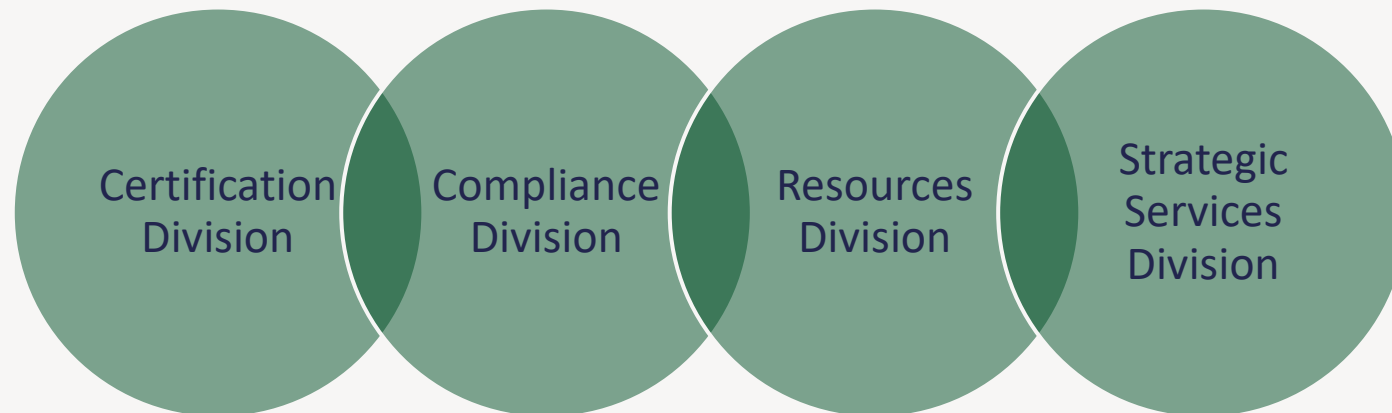
The City of Austin

Small and Minority Business Resources (ASMBR)



- **Administers the MBE/WBE, ACDBE/DBE and SBE Programs**
 - Certifies small and minority owned businesses that meet eligibility criteria(s)
 - Monitors utilization of certified firms on City contracts
 - Provides outreach, technical assistance, and resources to small and minority owned businesses.

SMBR Divisions



Austin Economic Development & Small Business Support

Our Mission: Supporting job creation and small business growth through training, coaching, connections, and access to capital across the five-county Austin MSA, including Travis, Williamson, Hays, Bastrop, and Caldwell counties.

Classes

- 15+ core topics covering day-to-day business operations, from business planning to AI for small businesses.
- Small Business Skills Certificate earned by completing at least six classes, taught by industry experts.

Coaching

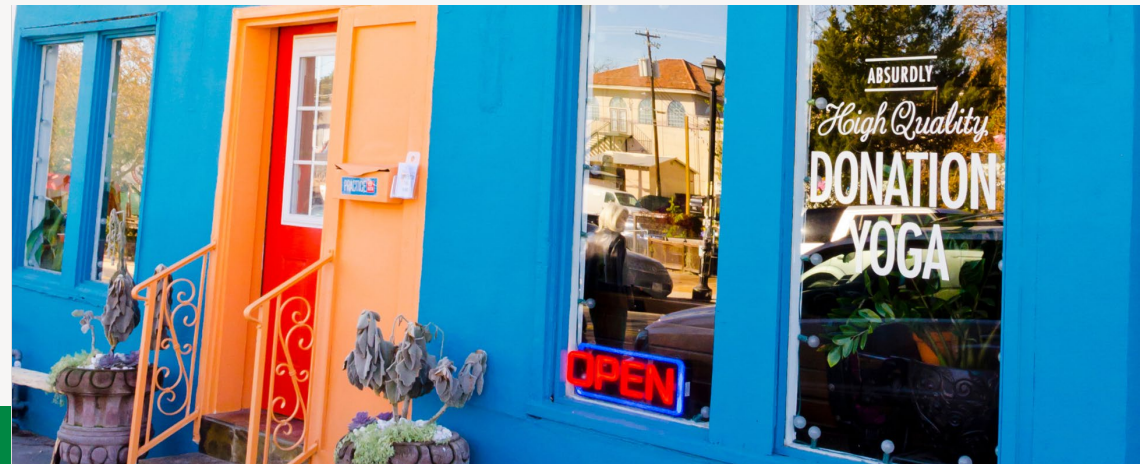
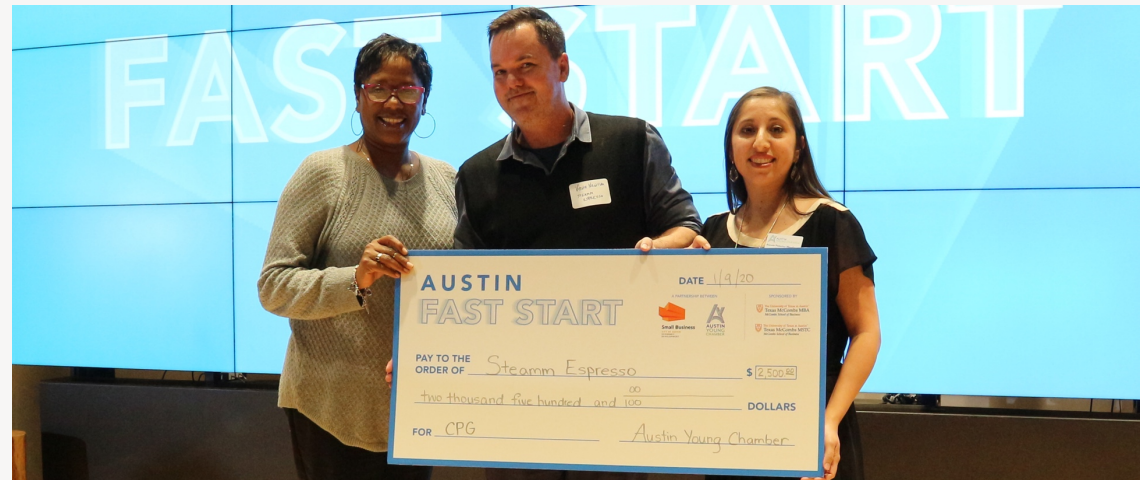
- One-on-one support for new and established businesses navigating growth and operational challenges.
- Personalized business, marketing, and financial planning, including financial readiness for lending.

Connections & Networking

- Citywide networking events including National Small Business Week and Small Business Fundamentals Week.
- Partnerships with chambers and ecosystem partners to support legal, tax, finance, and real estate needs.

Capital (Funding)

- Kiva Microloans (Feb 2026): 0% interest, no fees, community-funded loans up to \$15,000.
- Loan Buydown Program (Fall 2026): Up to \$50,000 in small business capital through reduced interest rates.



Austin Financial Services (AFS)- Small Business Program



- **AFS Administers the Small Business Procurement Program**

- Applies preference to Small Business Offerors for Invitation for Bid (IFB) and Request for Proposal (RFP) sourcings issued by the City. (Professional Services are not included by statute)
- Defines a Small Business as any person or corporate entity holding a recognized certification that, among the certification’s requirements, includes compliance with the US Small Business Administration’s Small Business Size Standard.
- Currently recognizes 34 small business certifications
- Preference Conditions and Amounts:

Invitation for Bids	Total Value	Bid Discount
Goods, General Services & Construction	\$50K to \$100K	5%
Goods & General Services	\$100K to \$500K	5%
Goods & General Services	\$500K to \$50M	3%

Request for Proposals	Total Value	Preference Points
Goods, General Services & Construction	\$50K to \$100K	10 points
Goods & General Services	\$100K to \$500K	10 points
Goods & General Services	\$500K to \$50M	6 points

City of Austin's Business Resources - Overview



- Procurement Strategies
- Coaching and Technical Assistance
- In-Person and Online Business Training, Workshops, and Educational Courses
- Networking Events
- Partnership Services
- Annual Recognition Events and Conference
- Digital Resources

City of Austin's Department Business Resources



Procurement Strategies and Other Programs	Coaching and Technical Assistance, and other Resources	Business Training, Workshops, Educational Courses and Networking Events	Annual Recognition Events and Conference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBE/WBE Procurement Program (ASMBR) • Construction SBE Program (ASMBR) • Local Business Preference (AFS) • Small Business Preference (AFS) • Contract Enhancements (AFS) • Business Expansion Program (AED) • Small Business KIVA micro lending (coming Jan 2026) (AED) • Small Business Loan Interest • Buy Down Program (coming 2026) (AED) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Growth Business Incubator (EGBI) (ASMBR and AED) • PeopleFund (AED) • Readiness Training Program (RTP) for HUBs (ASMBR) • Partnership Services • ASMBR Resources Guide (ASMBR) • Small Business Digital Resources (AED) • Small Business Resources Directory (AED) • Diversity and Equity Chamber Alliance Partnership (AED) • Quarterly Newsletter (ASMBR and AED) • Monthly Events Newsletter (ASMBR) • Needs Assessment Surveys (ASMBR and AED) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Training Classes and Small Business Skills Certificate (AED) • Vendor Academy – Construction Training Program (AFS) • Artist Career Training (AED) • Exploring Entrepreneurship (AED) • Small Business Office Hours (ASMBR, AED, AFS) • Monthly Pre-Certification Workshop (ASMBR) • I'm Certified, What's Next? Workshops (ASMBR) • Small Business Resources Workshops (ASMBR) • Doing Business with the City of Austin: Small Business Perspectives Panel Discussion (ASMBR) • Meet the Prime and Meet the Sub (ASMBR) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Small Business Connections Conference (ASMBR, AED, AFS) • Annual Diversity in Contracting Awards Ceremony (ASMBR) • Austin Small Business Fundamentals Week (AED) • National (Austin) Small Business Week For Women by Women (AED)

City of Austin's Department Business Resources



Austin Small and Minority Business Resources

- **MBE/WBE Procurement Program**
- **Construction SBE Program**
- **Supportive Service & Technical Assistance Providers**
- **Small Business Office Hours**
- **Economic Growth Business Incubator (EGBI)**
- **ASMBR Technical Assistance**
- **Readiness Training Program (RTP) for HUBs**
- Annual Small Business Connections Conference
- Pre-Certification Workshop (**monthly**)
- I'm Certified, What's Next? **Workshops**
- Small Business Resources **Workshops**
- Doing Business with the City of Austin: Small Business Perspectives (**panel discussions**)
- **Networking Events: Meet the Prime and Meet the Sub**
- Annual Diversity in Contracting Awards Ceremony
- Permitting and Development Workshops (coming 2026)
- **ASMBR Resources Guide**
- **Quarterly Newsletter**
- **Monthly Events Newsletter**
- **Needs Assessment Surveys**

Austin Economic Development

- **Business Training Classes**
- **Economic Growth Business Incubator (EGBI)**
- **PeopleFund (PF)**
- **Diverse and Equity Chamber Alliance (DECA) Partnership**
- Austin Small Business Fundamentals Week
- National (Austin) Small Business Week For Women by Women
- **Exploring Entrepreneurship**
- **Business Expansion Program**
- **Kiva Micro Lending Program** (coming Jan 2026)
- **Small Business MBA Graduate Consultant Partnership** (Coming Spring 2026)
- **Small Business Loan Interest Buy Down Program** (coming Fall 2026)
- **Artist Career Training**
- **Small Business Digital Resources**
- **Austin Small Business Resources Directory**
- **Newsletter**
- **Small Business Skills Certificate**
- **City Wide Small business Needs Assessment**
- Annual Small Business Connections Conference (**partner**)
- **Small Business Office Hours - partner**

Austin Financial Services

- **Local Business Preference**
- **Small Business Preference**
- **Contract Enhancements**
- **Vendor Academy – Construction Training Program (partner)**
- Annual Small Business Connections Conference (**partner**)
- **Small Business Office Hours (partner)**

City Resources for Small and Minority Businesses

Get Connected

City resources for the small
business community



Share Your Feedback



How can we enhance existing services to Austin's small businesses?

What additional services and resources are needed?

What additional ways can we deliver services?

How do you like learning about upcoming events and new services?

What is working and what can be improved?

Visit: SpeakUpAustin.org/smallbusinessstrong
Email: smallbusinessstrong@publicinput.com

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Help Strengthen Small Business Resources





Questions?

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Closing Remarks

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