

MDOT DBE SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE NARRATIVE

- Additional Guidance -

This guidance document is intended to assist firms in completing the Social Disadvantage Narrative portion of the MDOT DBE certification program as required by 49 CFR Part 26.111. If your firm requires any additional guidance, or has specific questions about filling out this form please contact our office at MDOT-DBE@Michigan.gov, or at **866-323-1264**

I. **Instructions:**

A social disadvantage narrative and Personal Net Worth Statement (PNW) must be submitted on behalf of **each individual owner** by which DBE certification is or will be based. For each of the questions asked in the form, please provide clear, specific, and detailed responses to the questions below. Please be sure to:

- **Be Factual and Specific** - Use concrete examples rather than general statements. MDOT does not presume the owner is disadvantaged based solely on their gender and ethnicity, each owner must demonstrate how their social disadvantaged has directly affected them.
- **Tell a Story** – Structure the responses chronologically to illustrate a journey of overcoming challenges.
- **Focus on the Impact** - Clearly show how the discriminatory conduct led to harm and negative consequences for your business and financial prospects.
- **Provide Documentation if Possible** – provide MDOT with documentation evidencing your social disadvantage, please provide those with your form.

- Educational Barriers - attended underfunded/low performing schools etc.
- Employment Challenges - faced unequal treatment in the workplace etc.
- Family and Upbringing - grew up in poverty, experienced housing/food insecurity etc.
- Community/Environment - live in high-crime/high-pollution areas etc.
- Health and Disability - lives with physical/mental disabilities etc.
- Legal or Systemic Obstacles - faced unequal treatment in the justice/immigration system etc.
- Social Exclusion - experienced prejudice based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation etc.

EXAMPLE: I am socially disadvantaged because I have not had access to the same resources as others. I was raised in an impoverished community with inferior schools and employment opportunities which made it difficult to pursue the same paths that others take for granted. Despite these barriers, I have worked hard to start a business and build professional experience.

II. **Specific Guidance for Form Questions:**

Question 1: *Please describe how the owner is socially and economically disadvantaged based on their own experience and circumstances that occurred within American society. Responses should not be limited to an individual's race or gender but should be specific about how the owner has themselves experienced social and economic hardships.*

Provide MDOT with the broad categories for how you are socially disadvantaged. Responses limited to simply defining your race, gender, age, religion etc. will not provide MDOT with sufficient evidence that you are socially disadvantaged.

Responses **may** include – but are not limited to:

Question 2: *Tell a story about your life that explains how you've faced tough times or unfair treatment— like not getting the same chances in school, jobs, money, or running a business. Talk about how your experience is different from other business owners who haven't faced these problems.*

Describe a specific circumstance that happened to you related to your social disadvantage. Responses should be as detailed as possible and should tell a story.

EXAMPLE: At the beginning of my career as a construction worker, I faced significant barriers to securing contracts, despite having completed the same union training as my peers. I was often perceived as less

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capable, not because of my skills or qualifications, but due to deeply rooted biases within the industry. These assumptions limited my opportunities for advancement and made it much more difficult to gain the experience and trust afforded more readily to others.

Question 3: *Please explain how these (above) have caused you economic harm, including to what extent, and how this may not be an issue for similar businesses owned and controlled by non-socially disadvantaged individuals.*

Describe in detail how your responses to the previous questions have affected your ability to conduct business in the Michigan construction industry. Focus on how the specific challenges that your firm faces; and how those are different from other firms that may not face these same challenges.

Responses **may** include – but are not limited to:

- Access to Capital - difficulty securing loans/banking unequal treatment etc.
- Contracting and Procurement Barriers - exclusion from opportunities etc.
- Marketing/Visibility Challenges - difficulty building brand recognition etc.
- Networking and Mentorship Gaps - fewer connections and influence, exclusion from industry
- Regulatory and Institutional Barriers - policies that negatively affect disadvantaged businesses etc.

EXAMPLE: Over time, I have worked hard to demonstrate my capabilities and have successfully grown my business. However, I continue to face systemic barriers where my qualifications and performance are often scrutinized heavily. I am seeking the opportunity to advance on equal footing with my counterparts and be evaluated based on merit, skill and experience