

(i) Recognize the certification of minority business enterprises by the State certification agency designated under § 14-303(b) of the State Finance and Procurement Article;

(ii) Recognize any other certification program that in the judgment of the WSSC substantially duplicates the requirements of the State certification agency;

(iii) Provide for an increase in minority business participation as prime contractors and subcontractors;

(iv) Permit the waiver of all or part of the provisions of the program for a specific contract if the WSSC determines that the application of the program to the contract conflicts with the WSSC's overall objectives and responsibilities; and

(v) Provide for the graduation of a minority business enterprise from the program if the WSSC determines that the minority business enterprise no longer requires the assistance or benefits offered by the program.

(4) Before accepting a certification program under paragraph (3)(ii) of this subsection, the WSSC shall examine the program to ensure that it adheres to the following guidelines:

(i) Bona fide minority group membership shall be established on the basis of the individual's claim that the individual is a member of a minority group and is so regarded by that particular minority community. However, the certifying agency is not required to accept this claim if it determines that the claim is invalid.

(ii) An eligible minority business enterprise shall be an independent business. The ownership and control by minorities shall be real, substantial, and continuing and shall go beyond the pro forma ownership of the business as reflected in its ownership documents. The minority owners shall enjoy the customary incidents of ownership and shall share in the risks and profits commensurate with their ownership interests as demonstrated by an examination of the substance rather than form of arrangements. Recognition of the business as a separate entity for tax or corporate purposes is not necessarily sufficient for recognition as a minority business enterprise. In determining whether a potential minority business enterprise is an independent business, the certifying agency shall consider all relevant factors, including the date the business was established, the adequacy of its resources for the work of the contract, and the degree to which financial, equipment leasing, and other relationships with nonminority businesses vary from industry practice.

(iii) The minority owners shall also possess the power to direct or cause the direction of the management and policies of the business and to make the day-to-day as well as major decisions on matters of management, policy, and operations. The business may not be subject to any formal or informal restrictions, through bylaw provisions, partnership agreements, or charter requirements for cumulative voting rights or otherwise that prevent the minority owners, without the cooperation or vote of any owner who is not a minority, from making a business decision of the business.