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>> Spillane: Okay. I would like to welcome you all here. And thank you for joining us today. We're going to slowly begin our event and allow people to come in, we see people coming in at a nice rate, so we'll slowly get this going. Thank you again. Our event today is about public procurement and it's for businesses considering whether public procurement is for them, how they should approach this and how to make the most of the opportunity and the resources that are out there.

And before we get into that I'll mention we have accommodations for people who are hard of hearing. You can look in the featured feed and you will see the link there. My colleagues will have posted it there. You can cut and paste that and put it into your browser to access a special captioning service that we offer. You can also use the captioning and subtitles that's in Teams. And you can look at this slide. It gives you explanations as to where to find the option to

switch it on and you can see that it offers many different languages. I'll just leave that here for a second for people to take a look as our audience is coming in and getting ready.

And if anybody is interested in the transcript for today's event you can access it after the event through the e-mail that we will send you. We will send you a survey e-mail and we would love you to fill out the survey. It only takes a minute or less and we're interested in your views on what we're doing and how we could improve it. But it will also give you that e-mail a link to where we host the recording of this event and the transcript on our website. So don't worry. You will be able to get all this information that's spoken about and shared today through the slides after the event.

And so I'm going to hand over to Adriana Cruz, the executive director of the economic development and tourism office of the governor. Over to you, Adriana.

>> Cruz: Thanks, Kelly. Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for joining us today. I'm Adriana Cruz, executive director of the economic development and tourism office and the office of governor Greg Abbott. On behalf of Governor Abbott and the team at the economic development and tourism office, I want to thank you for joining us today and welcome you to today's governor's small business webinar. Under Governor Abbott's leadership our office is committed to work with you to make sure that Texas continues to be ranked as the top state in the country to start a business and to be an entrepreneur. Through these webinars our goal is to provide you information and connect you with local resources that will help you find success on your entrepreneurial

journey.

Today we're going to focus on how small businesses can prepare to compete for public procurement contracts and the importance of business certifications in this process. You will understand how to develop an effective business development strategy to win public procurement contracts and you will hear from procurement experts from across the state to provide this information and to answer your questions. There's no doubt that Texas small business owners and entrepreneurs are the backbone of our state's economy. Because of your hard work, Texas continues to lead the nation and be the economic engine of the United States. Thanks to our small business team for organizing these events. Please don't hesitate to reach out if we can be of any assistance. And Kelly, I'll turn it back over to you.

>> Spillane: Great. Thank you, Adriana. And so I would like to explain to you who our panelists are today. We have a fantastic panel. We have Edward Campos, Director of the Small and Minority Business Resource Department at the City of Austin. Effectively Edward represents the buyer, the city. And he's going to talk about what his department does, how they help small businesses and how the city is focused on procuring but also encouraging more participation of small businesses, minority owned businesses and so on. Our second panelist is Gregory James, he is a director of the Procurement Technical Assistance Center in cross timbers in Arlington, in north Texas. We have Gabriela Zambrano, director of the minority business development agency in Houston. And Patrick Alcorn, director of the Veteran Business Outreach Center in north Dallas. Patrick does work with small businesses to help them

compare to compete for public procurement contracts. We have an excellent panel. Not only do we have a buyer but three training organizations that help prepare businesses one-on-one and in groups, and they also have fantastic content online.

And so, I am going to kick off our discussion for the first half of the webinar where we talk about frequently asked questions. These are things on top of everybody's mind. We would like you to focus on what's being discussed right now and then we will open the live Q&A feed in a little while. I'll let you know when we do that. Without further ado, thank you, Edward Campos, for joining us today. And you might be muted.

>> Campos: Thank you, Kelly. I appreciate the invite.

>> Spillane: First of all, I think I would be great to hear about your division, small and minority resource department at the City of Austin. Can you tell us what the key goals are of your team?

>> Campos: Sure, thank you again for having us. The key goal for our department is equity. Making sure that the procurements that are released for the City of Austin and on behalf of the City of Austin have equity for minority and women-owned businesses.

My department is responsible for procuring the viewing of the state threshold of \$50,000. We look for minority opportunities and women-owned opportunities within those various solicitations.

>> Spillane: Super. I know that you have quite a lot of team members there waiting to help small businesses. I'd love to hear from you about what your team offers small businesses to help them prepare to compete for city

contracts.

>> Campos: Yes. Thank you. We have approximately 31 full-time positions within the City of Austin's small minority resources department. If you're interested in getting certified with the City of Austin we have staff dedicated to walk you through that process. We also have compliance staff that once you're on a city contract will be your point of contact for any questions regarding how to get paid, any questions you have with your primary contractor, we're there to assist you in that process. We also have outreach components to our resources. We offer a variety of educational opportunities on how to do business with the city. We are launching for those firms that are certified with the City of Austin educational components that are virtual on how to do business not only at the municipal level but the state and Federal level as well. We're soon and anticipating launching that initiative. We're really proud of that.

>> Spillane: Excellent. That is great to hear. I suppose as companies are thinking about building their strategy for competing for these contracts. Where can they find the information about the kinds of goods and services that the city spends money on, for instance, do you have a database of useful market research information?

>> Campos: Great question. Yes, Kelly, we do. We have our financial services department called Austin finance online. You can find that at www.austinfinanceonline.com. It will take you to the website associated with various procurement transactions with the city. All contract data is captured there so you should be able to look at what has the city procured in the past. Various fiscal years are captured. And if you have any

questions there is also a reference guide on our website, the small minority business enterprise department's website that I believe will be captured through this presentation where you can just ask some questions of us and we can help you navigate what can be a very onerous process.

>> Spillane; That is great to know about. Don't worry, anyone in the audience, we're going to share all of these links that are talked about today in the slide deck that you can access later. And so thank you, Edward. And our audience will hear from Edward later when we do our live Q&A. And so I will now move on to talk to Gregory James. Gregory is from the PTAC. Thank you, Gregory, for making time today.

>> James: Thank you very much. Can you hear me okay?

>> Spillane: Yes. We can hear you great.

>> James: I appreciate the opportunity to be involved in this webinar. We're Cross Timbers procurement center, funded by the Department of Defense to help companies nationwide obtain contracts from Federal government in the state of Texas, there's nine of us. And we're located in the major cities. So you want to go ahead and go through the questions?

>> Yes. You know, I just want to mention that PTACs are across the nation and the state and we will share in our deck towards the end of the deck PTAC finder. So anyone in the state of Texas or anywhere in the nation can find the one nearest them by just putting in their zip code. I'll move straight along to our first question for you, Gregory, which is a fairly basic question but an important one. So when we think about public procurement it could be with the city, with the state, or Federal organization. And for a company thinking about

this as a first step, where should they start and why?

>> James: Good question. I think they basically should base their start on their target market. In other words, who are they targeting within the government space to do business with. So at the city and state level, obviously they want -- they have to register, one with every city, and then, of course, register to do business. And then with the state of Texas, there's the CMBL that covers all the state agencies and then with the Federal government there is betasam.gov. There's a registration there. We have clients that are involved in every single aspect -- every level of government. So, therefore, you know, they -- they can stay in touch and register to do -- to be ready to go. But like I said, it basically depends on who they're targeting their activities with, who is their customer and what does the customer require for me to do business with them.

>> Spillane: Excellent. You know, that brings up the second half of that issue, which is what do you do? What does your business do and that brings up the second question, which is what kinds of businesses should consider competing for public procurement? And I think taking a look at what cities, states, and Federal organizations spend money on is critical but you want to help us with that one. What kind of businesses should consider competing for public procurement?

>> James: At the major industries it's very competitive. IT, construction, services, and so on. The companies that I think have the most difficulty with public contracting are retail operations. In other words, they have a particular space. Although we have clients that are side shops and they have a retail

outlet and they can bid on contracts. So it's kind of hard to say. I think a lot of it has to do with, you know, what the governments are buying and do you match up with what they're buying. And as far as the Federal government is concerned, they buy a lot of things. So we usually will help our clients kind of ascertain if we think there's an opportunity there at any of those levels to do business.

>> Spillane: Great. And thank you so much. And like I said, we will be sharing information about our training organizations and the different things fear referring to. Thank you, Gregory. I'm going to move along and let everybody know that we will or will shortly open our live Q&A. You can type your questions into the feed in front of you. And my colleagues are going to publish the questions that are broadly relevant. You will see them in the featured feed. If you might look at the featured feed first and like any of the questions that you want to hear the answer to, we're going to prioritize the questions that have the most likes. We may not directly get to your question in the live Q&A sharing but my colleagues, I have two colleagues back of house answering questions directly. If you ask a question keep an eye on it because you may get a direct answer. We may not publish it but you will get a direct answer. So do keep a lookout for that. Like I said, like the questions that you would like to hear the answer to and we will address them first. We may not get to all questions, but like I said, we're sharing information so that you can access all of us if you don't get your question answered today.

So moving along, and I'd like to welcome Gabriela Zambrano. Thank you for joining us today.

>> Zambrano: Thank you so much for having me. I'm with the Houston MBDA Houston center, minority business development agency and we are a Federal grant. MBDA is the only Federal agency out there to help the businesses to grow. That's our mission, is to help minority-owned companies.

>> Spillane: That's great. And thank you. And I suppose, like I said before and our other speakers have mentioned this. Being successful at public procurement is all about your business development strategy, which is the critical thing to help you be successful. How can companies find out what other companies are winning contracts that they could supply on? How can they identify who their competition is?

>> Zambrano: One of the things that I tell people is to just prime, what does it mean a prime? Prime is a large company that has a direct contact with the big companies like Texas or any agencies out there. The state of Texas has around 180, 81 agencies out there. You can go to the state of Texas 2020 hub annual report. There you're going to see a list of agencies. If you're in Houston you can pick like the University of Houston. If you are in San Antonio you can pick the one in San Antonio and so forth. Pick the one that is around you. Click on it and they're going to tell you who are their vendors. And you can -- for construction it's pretty easy. It was construction and then you see the vendor's name. That will give you an idea who are the big players in that industry that you're looking for. Then once you look at that, you're like, okay, I see the vendor, what is happening, there's also, you can attend whenever there are big opportunities you go to Texas smart buy, look it up, go to the preproposal conference. It's very important. And you learn what the project is

about. Also, go look at who are the top 25 companies with the higher hub percentage. That means those companies are out there, have a strong hub department and then also you can look to the top 25 companies with the hub percentage. You can go to them and be like, I have my hub certification. Please help me. Now, I'm telling you all of this but you also need to understand what are your NIGP codes and NICS codes and this is part of your business development. What is NIGP, national institute for government participant code. You need this information. I want to say I'll put Sheetrock. You have to Google yourself, find out what is the number for Sheetrock for NIGP, for example, I'm going to give you a number. It's 54081. That number is not the same for the NICS code. That's a different number. And that one is the one you use for your income tax. That's the one that we know the -- the SBA is the one that measures your size standard. That code will be 2383110. I talked to you about your NIGP code, NICS code, your hub certification. And I'm hope that you all have capability statement. It's kind of like your resume. I one pager that tells companies who you are, who you want to be. If you don't have that, like, for example, you better have bonding, insurance, all of it. But you say I'm bonded up to a million dollars, so companies is a quick version to see what is your capacity. So these are the things you need to start thinking about when you are looking for companies. Now, if you're in Houston, you can go to the state of Houston's contract database. Houston.MBDA.com. You can look through departments like public works, GSA, housing, you can look there and you can look previous prime, you can look how they're using their certification. Now, with the City of Houston, it's a different type of certification.

That one is City of Houston has its own certification and minority, women, and small business enterprise and now the LGBTQ certification as well they're accepting. I'm already talking about certification, NIGP codes so your business development is which certification works best for me, one you get that certification, where should I go? Which agency? You're not going to go with the hub certification with the state of Houston. You go to the ones that get the state of Texas and you can go there, you can search. It's a lot of information out there but you just need to take your time and do some search.

There's also this website you can pay, called data analytics and see who is the project manager, contract information and so forth.

>> Spillane: Okay. That is great information. And what you've spoken to right there shows the complexity of this subject of public procurement. We're touching on the high points and introducing you to people who can help you and show showing you sources that can help you information this better for your company and what you bring to the table. With that in mind, actually, Gabriela, sometimes companies who are early stage in their public procurement journey decide it's not for them to become a prime, so can they consider collaborating with prime contractors and how do they do that? Do you have any thoughts on that?

>> Zambrano: Of course. Of course. And in that aspect I have to tell you you have to be very careful who you do, it's all about relationships. So one, make sure you're associated with the trade organization. So, for example, us and MBDA business center we host subs and sandwiches, which is an opportunity to meet with the big companies and the big companies will tell you

what kind of smaller companies are looking for, they will tell you if they need an electrician, plumber, painter, whatever is out there, they'll have. They also have like how you can become a subcontractor for them. So you also need to register with them. And that's one way to meet. Here in Houston we have the great Houston procurement form where every month they introduce you to different primes and the City of Houston has -- more than anything, make sure you concentrate on your core competence. For example, if I'm good at concrete, if I'm good at painting, that's what you say. You don't say I'm a general contractor. You don't go to the big company and you say because what they're doing is they want to hire more companies to have to expertise. So avoid being jack of all trade and master of none. Focus on a service or product that is really understood because if everybody looking at you for expertise, and when they put out the bid out there, when you are talking to them, if they trust you and they know you, they will try to help you a little bit how to become a good partner with them because everyone is looking for good partnership. So you've got to cultivate relationship with other firms and key personnel. This could be a person in meeting, a lunch. I know right now it's really hard but if you -- if somebody shares with you an e-mail address, send them an e-mail address, hey, how are you, so nice to see you, I would love to talk to you about my service. But when you do that, make sure you know what the company is doing. So there are companies who concentrate on commercial building. Go to those buildings. Other ones talk about affordable housing. So when you go there you get to prepare and know what the company is about. Also for with a handwritten thank you note. This will

definitely make an impression and set you apart. But try to go to all their vendor fairs that are out there. Don't try to become friends with everyone. Start making friends with one. And I'll give you a detail. We had a client with a contract. Oh, my goodness, congrats. The client told us it took three years to get the contract. When you develop a relationship don't think you're going to get a result tomorrow. This is a long-term relationship and once you do, they'll rely with you to get more contracts and work with you in the future. And once you have a good relationship with one prime, you can use that past performance to go to another company.

>> Spillane: That is all excellent advice, and you point to the long-term nature of this game as well as collaboration, long-term relationships are built over time and with trust. So super information there, Gabriela. I'm going move on to our last panelist today. Welcome Patrick Alcorn who has joined us before. It's great to have you again, Patrick.

>> Alcorn: Thank you, Kelly. I'm excited to be here. I can hardly wait to get started.

>> Spillane: Excellent. And you had to wait. Sorry about that, sir. Moving along. So my first question for you is can you suggest key things that entrepreneurs should be thinking about when they're developing their business development strategy for public procurement? What are the key things?

>> Alcorn: Yeah, I think a couple of key things to remember. The first one is recognize the opportunity that's out there. And the opportunity that I'll mention just real quickly at the Federal level. The Federal government is actually the largest purchaser of goods and services in the entire world. Last year the

Federal government spent a little more than \$600 billion on goods and services across the world. So if you have a product or service that's used by the Federal government and any of its agencies, you want to make the Federal government one of your customers and so forth. But to do that you have to know what opportunities exist out there. And there are tools and resources that can help you figure out what opportunities are out there so that you can develop your offering, whether it's a product or a service, to meet the needs of the government agencies. Not just at the Federal level but at the state level, local level, where we include folks like ISDs, independent school districts, and other public agencies, so to speak. So the most important thing is just to recognize that there is a slew of opportunities out there and you want to begin to make sure that you have within your system tools to identify those opportunities.

>> Spillane: Excellent. And so we've touched on the subject of certifications here and there so far. We haven't really gone into it. But let's talk about that right now. Certifications help minority and small businesses stand out when they're competing for public procurement contracts. And so, Patrick, I would be interested in how you would advise a small business on certifications and whether they should consider more than one? I would love to hear your views on that.

>> Alcorn: I'm glad the word -- the question had the word "consider" in it. Obviously I think they should consider more than one certification, but to actually go after and apply for the certification, I'll go back to the answer that Gregory James from the PTAC gave earlier in the call. And that is, it depends

upon who your target customer is. And here's the answer that I always give when it comes to certifications. Don't ask me, ask your customer. Your customer will tell you what certification it is that you need in order to do business with them. Because a certification is not just for you, the certification is for the customer. The customer has certain diversity goals in their procurement program. They have certain goals at the Federal level, they have certain goals at the local level, they have certain goals just because they're an organization and that organization is seeking to do business with certain groups, certain minority groups and so forth. Ask your buyer. Ask the buyer, hey, what certification -- what certifications are you looking for and what contractors are you working with at this time. They have set aside for veterans. So you want the veteran-owned business certification. They have set aside for -- or they have a goal to do business with women. So you need the woman's certification. They have a goal to do business in other areas, and so you need those certifications. But don't just go out and get every certification known to man. Ask your customer because the customer has specific goals that they're trying to achieve in terms of who they're doing business with and they will tell you what certification is the most appropriate certification for doing business with them.

>> Spillane: That is great advice, because it takes time to get that certification secured for you and time is money. If you're spending time and your essentially resources on getting a certification and it's not going to serve you and help you win more business, then it has been a waste, hasn't it? Knowing what you need to do is critical. Thank you for that, Patrick. Thank you,

panelist, for this session. We are now going to move along to our live questions and answers portion of the event. I'm going to hand over to Jarvis Brewer. Over to you.

>> Brewer: Thank you, so much, Kelly, and panelists. You have provided excellent information in your FAQs. A lot of it leads into the questions that I have seen being submitted. I'll take this time now to our audience. Continue to submit your questions. We've gone through a lot of information and we will continue to go through a lot more over this next half hour. But please continue to submit more questions to get them answered. Going after what we just discussed with Patrick concerning certifications. And I'm glad you answered that because that's a great segue for this next question that was submitted by Kathy. Is it necessary to register or get certified with cities if you registered with CMBL? Before I give this question -- I'm going to assign this to Edward representing the City of Austin. I would like for Edward to also mention the different levels of government. For example, city, state, and Federal, how there may be different certifications for each level. So over to you, Edward.

>> Campos: Thank you, Jarvis. So it's very important that no matter what level of government you are interested in procuring, working with, you have to look at what those requirements are. Every government at whatever level has different requirements for their vendors. So, for example, the City of Austin, you must register as a vendor regardless whether you're a minority, woman-owned business, you have to -- excuse me, you have to register as a business with the City of Austin. Secondly, if you are a minority and/or woman-owned, then, yes, there's a second layer that is attached to that through

our City of Austin certification process. So we do have our own certification team through my department and we only accept City of Austin certified vendors. So if you are certified with another entity and you are interested in doing business with the City, you still have to go through our process to be certified because we do have different criteria than other entities around the state and that we're unique. We have a personal net worth requirement for the City of Austin. Other entities don't have a personal net worth criteria. So I would -- first thing, if you are interested in working with the city or any city, for that matter, know what the requirements are. Know how you fit with your existing certifications that you have. Some certifications do require a fee to process your application. We do not. Our services are free of charge. And we are here to assist you at any level. We have information related to the State and the procurement projects that they're working on. We can certainly provide you with that information. And at the Federal level, of course, we do lots of work with them since we are a recipient of Federal funds for our airport and for various road projects across Austin and the surrounding areas. So you know, we are here as a resource. And I will say don't be afraid to ask questions. We are here to help you. We want you to be successful because when you're successful, we're successful as a city.

>> Brewer: Absolutely. Thank you for that, Edward. I want to follow up with the CMBL since Kathy asked about that certification specifically. That is a certification given through the Texas comptroller public accounts, so it is a state-level certification. If it is your intention to do business with the city, whether that's Austin, San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, you may need that

city-specific certification. The CMBL is a master bidder list for doing business with state agencies and I won't necessarily be useful for doing business with a city. So that's the division that I wanted to kind of make clear for any and all of our guests in attendance. And at the same time, if you are getting a certification with the City of Austin, well, that certification is for the City of Austin. The City of Houston may and will have their own certification.

So moving right along, this next question, I'm going to skip -- sorry, Gregory, did you have additional?

>> James: I wanted to add something else about certifications. We run into it a lot. So the state and city certifications in general are part of a subcontracting plan. In other words, the cities and the state governments, they cannot set aside contract opportunities for those certification statuses. So usually what happens, if a prime contractor wins an award, they have the subcontracting goals they have to meet. At the Federal level, the socioeconomic certifications, they're both subcontracting as well as prime contracting. So a lot of people, you know, they kind of -- they don't quite understand how all these certifications work together. But at the Federal level they can be used as set asides, so all women contracting officer can set aside a contract for women-owned businesses only to bid on or they can even do sole source. And then if a prime -- in a non-socioeconomic certified company wins as a prime, then those primes have those goals they have to meet. So I just wanted to kind of lay the groundwork for that. Thank you.

>> Brewer: Yeah. Absolutely. And that's great information. I see, Gabriela, did you also have something?

>> Zambrano: Also, I want to explain to people that there are gender and race neutral. I know we mentioned minority, veterans and women, but also called small business enterprise, SBE, that the city has certification. Don't be discouraged if you do not qualify in those category. There's still some goals, small, but includes the SBE, small business enterprises. That's all.

>> Brewer: That's a great point. Oftentimes when we're talking about certification, women-owned, veteran-owned, minority-owned get a lot of attention so there is just that distinguishing certifications across -- again, it can will across the entire state or from each independent City of just a small, certified small business certification. I have to mention this and I think our camera city is not working correctly. I apologize, Edward. It seems to like you quite a bit so it's stuck on you for the moment. Dealing with live webinars. It happens.

Moving on to the next --

>> James: Should I apologize for everybody having to see my face.

>> Brewer: I'm trying to get it to just show the slides but that's not working. Either way, we'll proceed. Our audience can still hear and get the information. So our next question is actually somewhat of a follow-up of the last one. I'm going to skip the order a little bit and go to Patrick with this one. Is there a certification for veteran-owned businesses? Patrick, do you know anything about that?

>> Alcorn: Yes, there is. And there's -- I want to make sure that we understand the language, the difference between a certification and a verification. At the Federal level, if you're doing business particularly with the

veterans administration or the FAA, those two agencies -- maybe -- there might be one or two other agencies, but primarily the VA and FAA require what's called verification. Verification is a system that you go through using the VA's ombudsman program in order to verify that you are a veteran-owned business or a services able veteran-owned business. That verification adds you to a list known as the vendor information pages, the VIP pages. That's a list that government buyers go out to when they're looking for veteran-owned businesses to do business with. They're on that verification list. So verification is different from certification. The certification process for veteran-owned business is two-fold. One, the most important thing to recognize is, it's a self-certification process. There's no special organization that you have to go through or special process that you have to go through. You simply go out to the SAM site, the SAM.gov site, SAM.gov, go out to the SAM site and designate yourself as a veteran-owned business. You answer the questions and submit the required documentation which is usually your DD214 which is the document used -- veterans already know what that is. The document used to identify your service record. So that's the self-certification process.

Some of your customers will not accept self-certification as a veteran-owned business. They want a more formal process. Again, go back to the question that I answered earlier. Ask your customer what certification they prefer. So in that case, if you need a specific certification, there are organizations out there that provide those certifications. And I'm thinking of the national association for veteran-owned businesses, they do certifications for folks who are not just

contracting in the public space but contracting in the private space. Say you want to contract with American Airlines or T-Mobile or one of the other large public organizations. So the quick answer to your question, Jarvis, is, yes, there is veteran certification, it is a self-certification process unless your customer wants something more specific.

>> Brewer: Thank you so much for that, sir. And I want to mention, again, what exactly Patrick Alcorn does, he is the director of the veterans business outreach center. Anything and everything all veterans related to entrepreneurship, Patrick and his counterparts in south Texas, Juan Florez, definitely look them up. Patrick's information will be here at the end of the presentation. So contact Patrick and/or Juan.

Another thing I want to mention about -- it's not really a certification but for veteran-specific business owners who are -- have a product. The Texas veterans commission, I believe it rolled out last year. They have a logo that can be attached to physical products. It's really for promotion and marketing purposes, but that logo can be something that distinguishes yourself from a competitor. So that may be something to look into as well if you have a physical product.

So moving right along, this next question, I'm going to get to Gregory. And the question is, what is the 8a certification and who can walk me with the application -- walk me through the application process?

>> James: Okay. So the SBA sponsors the 8a program. The 8A program is a nine-year developmental program. You're in it for nine years and you're basically married to SBA in terms of your corporate documents, your activities

and so on. Also, too, what happens, you have to be in business at least two years to get that certification. And you can obtain the paperwork through SBA and you fill out the application and then it's submitted to a group. Now, we are -- we review those applications before you submit it. But it's a nine-year program. And it has some values. It's the oldest of all the Federal socioeconomic certifications that have been out there, so therefore buyers in the government recognize that certification better than they would women-owned and hub zone and service disabled vet. Also, let me add something about the services-abled veteran certifications. At the state level a veteran-owned company and a services able company can qualify for the state hub program. And that's -- once again, that's a subcontracting program. But not only -- so you can look at the qualifications about what does it take to become a hub vendor. And services abled veteran, I think it was voted in maybe a couple or three years ago, can apply.

>> Brewer: Thank you for that, Gregory. And our colleagues behind the scene, Michael Trigger submitted the report. I believe Gabriela mentioned the report earlier. The 2020 hub report has been inserted into the feed, if anyone would like to take a look at that, that link is available. Additionally, this next question is actually -- I like how these questions are flowing one after the other and related. It's actually -- I'm going to stick with you, Gregory. The question is, does Cross Timbers offer free services to disabled veterans? And then, Patrick, you may have some additional things after Gregory.

>> James: Yes, we do. The majority of our services are free of charge. We do charge for a couple of things. We do market research, detailed market

research for our clients at all the government levels. And then we have a mid match service. But the majority of our -- all of our services are free to users.

>> Brewer: Thank you, sir. And Patrick?

>> Alcorn: And just like Greg mentioned, all of our services are free as well. They've been paid for based upon your service in the military. So thank you all for your service, for wearing the uniform. And also I want to mention for military spouses, for those who stood next to those veterans wearing the uniform, our services are free. We have a unique portal as well. It's an online, on-demand government contracting training portal with a little over 110 on-demand contracting courses that we make available to clients. So getting access to that portal you will need to contact our e-mail address at uta.vboc@uta.edu. They will follow up in an e-mail but you will be able to go to our particular online portal and take free courses on demand, everything from what is government contracting to how to prepare a capability statement, to how do I find my first government contracting opportunity, how do I place the bid. You name it, we got every single aspect of government contracting in on demand courses and those courses are typically about 25 to 30 minutes each course. Some courses may be a little bit longer. But most courses are about 25 to 30 minutes long.

>> Brewer: Wonderful. Wow, that's excellent news for our veteran community. I believe Gabriela mentioned earlier, the difference in the levels of the government will determine who you need to go to to get certifications or, in this case, to get assistance. So we have our local level, city or county, we have the state level, and this is a great time to, again, reiterate the hub, the hub

program, historically underutilized businesses. It's for doing business at the state level. Who can qualify for this hub certification? It's for disabled veterans, it's for minorities, and you can look at the demographics for that. And women-owned businesses. So that program is run by the Texas comptroller of public accounts, a state agency. If it is your intent to do business with a state agency or a state college or university, that may be a certification you may want to look into.

This next question is -- I'm going to refer to Gabriela. You mentioned earlier something about bonds. And this question is, can I know what is the minimum requirement if a bond is required?

>> Zambrano: I believe most companies that work with government entities require some bonding. It all depends on each prime. My suggestion to you, and you can feel free to send an e-mail, just work with somebody to see about your bond capacity. It's kind of like your insurance. It's kind of to let you know what is happening. But also I want to touch base a couple of things that was mentioned before. One for 8A, SBA do webinars every single month. And they walk you through the application process. That one is free. You can do it yourself. You don't have to depend on anybody. If you become a client, there is a fee. You have to apply for 8A. Now, I want you to understand, you must be in business for two years. You must be a US citizen. And you must have at least \$750,000 in sales. So even though the program is great, once you're in it, and you graduate, you can never go back. So there are people who are in it but they just don't have the capabilities, okay? So I want you to understand all of those things. But, yes, bonding is very important. If you want to contact,

I think at the end of this there's MBDA, and we can refer to you a couple of people that can actually help with bonding which are backed by the SBA.

>> Brewer: Thank you so much, Gabriela. Those are great points for everyone to consider the time and the money aspect.

So moving right along, I'm going to circle back to Edward on this. Where do I go to get bonded and certified? What county building or workforce? I'm in the Ft. Worth area. Where can I go to get some information about bonding?

>> Campos: That's a great question. We have a resource guide that we can provide to anyone interested that will provide you will resources to get bonding or to increase your bonding. It's a lot of financial documentation that you have to provide in order to get bonding. And so we want to make sure you know what you need to do. We will help you walk through the process. And while the City of Austin doesn't currently provide bonding services, we will provide with the resources. It's very important when you do business with any organization, the bonding requirements for that particular contract that you're interested in are going to change. So no one contract is going to be the same from the next. So you need to understand what are my bonding requirements. Sometimes prime firms will put the bonding capacities that they have are back on to you as a subcontractor. So you have to be aware of that as well. Know what your contract says between you and your prime contractor. That's going to be extremely important. And based on where you are going to be working, for example, the bonding capacity in the insurance requirements for work at an airport are going to be a little bit more than they would be for a normal road project. You may still be doing civil level work but because of the security

measures and because of the complexities of working at a place like an airport or power plant, you are going to have to need more insurance and more bonding requirements. So just always be aware of that. And again, ask questions. There's no fault in asking the questions. And if you want us to ask on your behalf, we can do that. But just make sure that you're going in with all your information at hand and you're not going in blind because that will mess you up as a company. It will cost you money. And that's one thing we don't want to have happen.

>> Brewer: Absolutely. Thank you so much for that, Edward. One organization we haven't mentioned thus far is SBDCs. They are a great source of ton of information, whether it is bonding, whether it is just general business advice, or in the world that we're in now, the FAA programs such as the PTT idle, shutter venues operating grant. SBDCs are underused organization for a wealth of information. So I believe we have an SBDC founder also on our contact list of resources. So you will see that here shortly on one of our subsequent pages. But definitely get in contact with your local SBDC. Wherever you're at in Texas or there's going to be one within 20 miles of you. So there's going to be an SBDC who can help you and be local and walk you through any of these processes. But as Gabriela just mentioned, our next question is actually, is there a fee to a company seeking assistance with the application process? The SBA has the webinars that walk you through the 8a certifications. But other cities may have a fee for them doing the assistance. But go straight to the SBA. It's their program. They're overseeing the 8a certification so you can get all of the assistance you need straight from their

monthly webinars.

Moving forward, this next question is directed to the VBOC. Is the VBOC able to provide assistance to the SDVOSD or VOSB companies wanting to buy equipment through the state and Federal surplus property programs? Patrick?

>> Alcorn: The quick answer to that is yes and no. The program is purchasing property from the state and Federal government is pretty straight forward. So the most that we can do at the VBOC is help you -- is help you with the portal and help you with access to the portal, help you finding the equipment and things that you're looking for. But we don't have any special insight to help you make those purchases. But we can point you and help you with navigating the resource for making those purchases. You're muted, Jarvis.

>> Brewer: I fell victim to it. I knew I would. This next question is a follow up. Not specifically to the SDVO -- I'm losing my letters, SDVOSB certification but something else related to veteran-owned small businesses. This question was submitted is about govology. Is that only for veterans? I would like some od training as well but just not for veterans. Can I use and take advantage of govology, Patrick, if I'm not a veteran?

>> Alcorn: I answered that in the Q&A as well. Govology is open to anyone who is interested in government contracting training. But unfortunately free access to govology is only available for veterans. That's just a special relationship that I have with govology that gives me a special code for veterans and so forth. And I actually pay for it. So it's free to the veterans but I'm the one that's actually paying for it. But you can go to govology.com. The

courses on there run about \$75 per course for the general public. But again, if you're a veteran, I have access to give you free access to taking any of those courses.

>> Brewer: Thank you, Patrick. It's ironic you and I were just talking about govology, what, last week, and here's a question about it. I'm going through the feed and I'm seeing other questions as we're in our last ten minutes. I see a mention from Robert Marraro who is down in Corpus Christi PTAC. His information as well as contact e-mail as well, so if you're in the Corpus Christi, south gulf coast area, there's another resource for you.

All right. So moving on to our next questions.

>> Alcorn: Jarvis, if you don't mind, a quick chime in. Just like Gregory James and the PTAC, nationwide, there are six in Texas, and you've mentioned there's two VBOCs in Texas, one in south Texas with Juan at UTRGV. But there's 22 VBOCs across the nation. So if you're on this call and you're from anywhere else in the US and not from Texas, you also have access to a VBOC at SBA.gov/vboc. Thanks, Jarvis.

>> Brewer: Thank you, sir. Absolutely. Question have a question from Nicole Welch. I hope you're still with us, Nicole. This next question I'm going give to -- I believe we're back around to Edward once again, or did I -- yes, Edward. How do you select the category when you have a special service. I am a entrepreneur. I have a special service. Not a product. How do I select a category if I want to do business with a government agency?

>> Campos: We use a variety of tools and codes which are a little bit more robust than the NICS codes. So we will help you walk through what we feel

are the best codes for your company based on your company profile, based on the contracts that you performed in the past. So we can take you from something that's very general to very specific. So if you contact our agency as part of our certification process, we can help you walk through what we feel are the appropriate codes. And you also want to make sure that you select codes that are being bought by the entity that you want to do business with. I think that's going to be very important. Because again, all the programs at the various municipalities have the state of Texas, county, it's their -- they are there and created to help them secure companies, whether at the prime or sublevel, that actually perform the services they need. So that's very important.

>> Brewer: Wonderful. Wonderful. Wonderful.

>> I'd like to add something, too.

>> Brewer: Yes, sir. Go ahead.

>> Alcorn: For NICS codes there is a website you can go to. It's sponsored by the Census Bureau. You can put in keywords. And those keywords will produce different types of NAICS codes that apply. That's a keyword search. Also the Fed uses product service codes and there's also a website you can go to put in keywords and you can see what comes up. Another good way of identifying NAICS codes and product service codes and NIGP codes, if you can look at a database that shows the -- I'm sorry, if you can look at the solicitation database, in other words, a lot of times, especially the Federal level, the contracting officer will assign NAICS codes and product service codes do the solicitation. I'm not really sure what happens at the state and local government

areas, but at least at the Federal, those relevant, as they see it, NAICS codes and product service codes are assigned to the solicitation. You can look at those solicitations, see what kinds of codes are being used and decide, okay, maybe we need to add this one to ours. Thank you.

>> Gregory, I'm going to stick with you for this next question as well. I'm going to get a couple more before we run out of time here. This question is from Charlene. The question is, once I have my 8a certification, how do I find agencies who are accepting bids? Do I need to partner with a mentor or how am I going to get these bids or who is looking for bids? How do I find that information?

>> James: Very good question. First of all, I'd like to say that certifications or verification, all they do is open the door. They do not guarantee you work. So you have to think of it from that perspective. What was the other part of the question?

>> Brewer: That's it. We've come full circle now. The question was, I've gotten this certification, how I do find the bids? How do I find the people looking for it?

>> James: Sure. In our market research work we even do a webinar, free webinar on data mining, procurement databases. So we can teach you how to basically access historical data. At least at the Federal level. And you can tell what transactions were awarded to an 8a or a woman-owned or services able, or small business. You can tell, you can find where those transactions were awarded to. Then that gives you an idea. Once again, we're targeting the audience you want to appeal to. Then that tells you, maybe I need to target

this agency because they're real good about doing 8a certifications or awarding contracts to 8a firms. So it's -- you know, it's all part of targeting. It's all part of understanding who your market is, what they do, how they do it. And then making good decisions after that. It's -- I call it homework. And it saves a lot of time going forward.

>> Brewer: You're absolutely right. And that's exactly what I meant as far as coming full circle to where each of you mentioned at least in part how identifying your target market and reason why you're getting the certification or verification. You're doing that to have that competitive advantage with your customer. So you should know the company that you're trying to obtain a bid from before you obtain the certification. Not get the certification and then look for bids. So just want to throw that in there. Full circle now that we're back to where we began in the beginning.

>> James: By the way, one other thing. We deploy that philosophy with capability statements. In other words, capability statements should be targeted to the customer you're going after.

>> Brewer: Wonderful. That's a great word to end on. Patrick, did you have something? I heard someone speaking up. No. Okay. Wonderful. Well, it is 1:59. We are going to close out this event. I know we probably didn't get to every question. But here shortly we're going to show the slide where you can contact any and all of our organizations for follow-up. But thank you so much to our panelists, to all of our audience for submitting some great questions. At this time, I'm going to hand it over to Kelly. Kelly?

>> Spillane: Thank you so much, Jarvis. And well-done, panelists. Lots of

really specific questions. Great information shared. And we are just going to close out quite quickly by highlighting our new governors small business resource portal. It is a portal that we host on our website, there is a link to access it. It's a really useful tool for any business owner to get information on local, state, and Federal resources. Access to business advisor growth assistance, funding sources and so on. All of the things that you might be looking for to help your business grow. We should have those resources in this portal. You can answer simple questions -- five questions, takes a moment to do that. And then the portal will show you resources that are useful to your customized search and you can e-mail them to yourself or print them out. It takes a moment. We're getting very good feedback. It's been live and available for the last month. We're happy with how it's doing.

I wanted to raise awareness of that. I just want to also reiterate other resources available at the office of the governor. We have a public procurement information page and we have all of these other things that could be useful to you, a link to the portal, link to business permit office, a link to our webinar series, which we have in our library on our website, access to previous transcripts and slide decks and there is access to our events calendar.

Looking ahead, we're going to have a webinar on May 12th or 13th. And in fact later in the year we will everybody have in-person events across the state in the last quarter of this year. So all of that information is available through these links, and our very final slide is this. It shares access to our panelists, the City of Austin, City of Houston, MBDA, PTAC and VBOC finders to find an organization like that near you. Access to the reports that were mentioned.

The data analytics that Gabriela mentioned, hub report she mentioned also. And access to SBA training. They also have 7J training which is specific public procurement training. There's a link to their plans in relation to that. Links to their other training including 8a. And a lender finder if anybody is interested in that. And we may add a couple of other links to this slide. It might look a little crowded by the time you see it because a couple of things were mentioned that are not on here but we will add them. And in any case, if your question wasn't answered today, you can access our panelists and ourselves through information on these slides. And I would like to thank you all for making time today. To join us for the hour, and again, thank you to our very esteemed panelists. We are so grateful you were able to join us. And once again, thank you for joining us. We look forward to seeing you at our next event which should be May 12th or 13th. You will get notification once that's decided. Have a great day. Thank you for joining us.

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