

## Are You Certified?

by Valerie Fontaine, Esq.

If your search firm is eligible but lacks certification as a woman-, minority-, veteran-, or other diversity-owned or small business, you're missing out on valuable business opportunities!

Most governmental entities now mandate that their vendors and their vendors' suppliers not only are diverse, but also are certified as such. Hence, law firms and businesses direct a certain percentage of their purchasing dollars to certified diverse suppliers to position themselves to bid for state and federal business. By becoming a certified diversity supplier, your firm not only has a better chance of landing the client, but you also become doubly attractive as it helps your clients compete for governmental business, as well.

A diverse supplier is at least 51% owned (holding equity), operated, and controlled by a person or persons of a diverse or disadvantaged background (minority, woman, LGBT, disabled, veteran, small business, etc.). To become certified, your firm undergoes a review process through an appropriate agency to ensure your business actually is owned, controlled, and operated by qualified persons. For a small business certification, your firm also may need to provide information regarding economic status, revenues of the business, and personal net worth.

There are several certification agencies, so do an online search for one that's best for your firm. You can receive multiple types of certifications if your firm qualifies in more than one category, and be certified by several different organizations in the same category.

Once you receive certification, let the world know! Post a copy of your certificate(s) on your website. Mention your certification at every marketing opportunity, and remind your clients and potential clients that, in addition to offering superior service, your certification helps them meet their supplier diversity goals.

Be sure to let NALSC headquarters know, so you can be identified as such in our online searchable membership directory at <https://www.nalsc.org/members/>. The Certified Business Enterprise category was added at the request of our law firm supporting members who wished to find certified search firm members specifically to direct work their way.

With government entities and businesses increasingly demanding that their outside legal representation look more like America, and law firms looking to diversify their vendors (such as search firms), don't ignore any advantages via certification that your firm is qualified to pursue. The certification process may seem onerous, but it's worth it!

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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