Small Professional Services Firm (SPSF) Program Guidelines



NEW APPLICATIONS AND RENEWALS

(For use by firms in obtaining certification in the Small Professional Services Firm program)

Revised September 20, 2016

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Policy Statement

It is the policy of the North Carolina Department of Transportation to ensure non-discrimination based on race, religion, color, creed, national origin, sex, handicapping condition or age in the award and performance of its contracts. The Department is committed to creating an equitable environment in which small businesses can compete fairly for contracts financed with federal and state funds under the Small Professional Services Firm (SPSF) program. The Department will take all reasonable and necessary steps to ensure equal opportunity in the administration of the Small Professional Services Firm program.

A copy of this program document containing the approved policy and guidelines is available for review by any interested individual at the following physical location and at the following web link: <u>https://connect.ncdot.gov/business</u>:

Mailing Address:

Office of Civil Rights 1511 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-1511

Fax: (919) 508-1818

Questions or requests for additional information regarding the SPSF program should be directed to the SPSF Certification Officer or the State Contractor Utilization Engineer at (919)707-4800. For outside Raleigh the number is 1-877-650-0130.

James H. Trogdon III Secretary of Transportation Date

Rodger Rochelle, PE Administrator of Technical Services Date

Purpose

The Small Professional Services Firm (SPSF) program was developed to provide consultant opportunities for firms that meet the eligibility criteria to compete against other consultant firms that are comparably positioned in their industries. The Department of Transportation is committed to providing contractual opportunities to firms deemed eligible to participate in the SPSF program.

Authority

General Assembly House Bill 200, Session Law 2011-145, states that NCDOT will identify "Professional Services Contracts of \$250,000 or less that are likely to attract increased participation by Small Professional Services Firms and then direct the solicitation of applicable contracts to those firms". This bill is used in conjunction with North Carolina General Statute 136-28.1(f) which states: "Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Department of Transportation may solicit proposals under rules and regulations adopted by the Department of Transportation for all contracts for professional engineering services and other kinds of professional or specialized construction of transportation infrastructure. In order to promote engineering and design quality and ensure maximum competition by professional firms of all sizes, the Department may establish fiscal guidelines and limitations necessary to promote cost-efficiencies in overhead, salary, and expense reimbursement rates. The right to reject any and all proposals is reserved to the Board of Transportation."

History

The SPSF certification is a race-neutral certification established in 2007 by NCDOT, in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration, to have a means for small engineering businesses to participate on an engineering team. The General Assembly established a formal bidding process for the SPSF program by House Bill 200, Section 28.9 of the 2011 session.

Eligibility

Any business established for profit that meets the certification standards outlined herewith is eligible for participation in the NCDOT's SPSF program.

Small businesses determined to be eligible for participation in the program must meet size standards and verify the appropriate maximum gross receipts for their type of business. The specific annual gross receipts total will vary depending on the type of business and/or the type of services rendered.

Program Administration Requirements

SPSF projects shall meet typical Department standards for quality and performance, and firms must be prequalified by the Department in their disciplines to submit an interest/proposal and work for the Department.

Only those SPSF firms with current SPSF certification may submit their interest/proposal on a project advertised for SPSF firms unless there is an exception in the advertisement of the project.

SPSF firms are <u>not</u> limited to SPSF projects only.

Acronyms and Definitions used in this document

<u>SPSF</u>	Small Professional Services Firm - refers to the program and its participants.
<u>Race and Gender-neutral</u>	Measure or program in which goals are not consciously set in order to achieve significant participation by historically underutilized groups. In a race and gender-neutral program, other methods are used to achieve participation; i.e., aggressive outreach, targeted advertising, unbundling of work items, etc.
NCDOT/Department	North Carolina Department of Transportation
<u>Secretary</u>	The appointed official head of NCDOT, a member of the NC Governor's Cabinet.
<u>Contractual Services Unit</u>	The administrative oversight group that has the responsibility of information management, certification, and policy development for the SPSF Program.
Contractor Utilization & Certification Section	Part of the Contractual Services Unit responsible for certification documentation and administration of the SPSF program.
Shall	The word "shall" is used to relay an absolute requirement for the contractor.
Will	The word "will" is used to relay responsibility of the Department.

Program Goals

The SPSF Program is a race and gender-neutral program. Participation in the SPSF program is available exclusively to those firms that meet the certification standards contained in this document with no regard to the individual characteristics (i.e. race, ethnicity, gender) of the owner.

Certification Standards

After reading the contents of this document, a firm meeting all the standards is encouraged to submit the forms shown in the back of this document or from the website <u>https://connect.ncdot.gov/business</u>. After the proper forms are received by the Department they will be reviewed and, if found acceptable, the firm will be placed on the Department's list of SPSF businesses found within the Transportation Directory.

A firm applying must certify that it complies with all these requirements. False statements could result in all applicable civil and criminal penalties being imposed including, but not limited to, the firm being barred from doing business with NCDOT.

In determining if a business meets the criteria for SPSF certification, the Department uses the following standards:

- 1. Size
 - a. A SPSF must be a small business as defined by the Small Business Administration (SBA), 13 CFR Part 121 in Sector 54 to be eligible for participation in the NCDOT's SPSF program. The SBA determines the size by a firm's gross receipts or number of employees.
 - b. The applicant must select the NAICS code(s) for the firm's industry and verify the firm's average receipts for the three previous tax years or average number of employees for each pay period over the company's last twelve months before submitting the application form.
 - c. *Receipt* means the "total income" (or in the case of a sole proprietorship, "gross income") plus "cost of goods sold" as these terms are defined and reported on Internal Revenue Service tax return forms.
- 2. Independence

The firm shall be independent as indicated by the absence of control or influence of a non-qualifying firm. The firm shall be free of such items as shared personnel, facilities, equipment, financial or other resources. The firm shall also be free of affiliation including common ownership, common management, and contractual relationships with non-qualifying firms, as well as current SPSF qualified firms. Possessing multiple SPSFs (i.e. "spin off" companies) with shared management, personnel, facilities, equipment, financial or other resources is prohibited in the program.

3. Integrity

The Department will consider whether a firm has exhibited a pattern of conduct indicating its involvement in attempts to evade or subvert the intent or requirements of the SPSF program. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a. A firm, that would otherwise be deemed ineligible, establishes other firms for the distinct purpose of meeting the size requirement and participating in the SPSF Program.
- b. An SPSF business that is selected with the intent to sublet the work to another SPSF-qualified or non-qualified firm.
- c. A firm that submits letters of interest and is awarded contracts, but does not own or have independent access to equipment or resources necessary to perform the work.
- 4. For-Profit Business

The firm shall be a bona fide business that performs work for the purpose of making a profit.

- a. *Existing* assumes that the firm is currently operational and is no longer in the concept stage of development.
- b. The Department will not refuse to certify a firm solely on the basis that it is a newly formed firm.
- c. Not-for-profit organizations are not eligible for SPSF certification.

5. Cooperation

SPSF firms and firms seeking SPSF certification shall cooperate fully and promptly with the Department's requests for information relevant to the certification process, investigations and other requests for information. Failure or refusal to provide such information within the required timeframe is grounds for denial or removal of certification.

- 6. Other
 - a. For a SPSF project requiring prequalification, a firm must be prequalified and certified as a SPSF at the time a letter of interest/proposal is submitted for the proposed work, unless otherwise noted in the advertisement.
 - b. Prequalification is an independent process that evaluates a firm's staffing, experience, and financial resources generally required to perform successfully on a project. For assistance with the consultant prequalification process, contact the Contractor Qualification Section of the Contractual Services Unit at (919) 707-4800. It should be noted that SPSF disciplines must match prequalified disciplines.
 - c. SPSF firms that are found ineligible for participation or have otherwise been prohibited from participation due to size, independence and for profit, may apply for certification after the disqualifying condition ceases to exist. The Department must evaluate the eligibility of a firm on the basis of present circumstances and must not refuse to certify a firm based solely on historical information if the firm currently meets the standards of this part.
 - d. Individuals who are citizens or lawfully admitted permanent residents of the United States must control the firm's management and daily business operations.
 - e. A firm certified as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), and/or Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) must apply separately for certification in the SPSF program.

Application Process

Applications for the SPSF program may be obtained from the Contractual Services Unit, at 919-707-4800 (or 1-877-650-0130 outside of Raleigh), from the website address: <u>https://connect.ncdot.gov/business</u> or at the back of this document.

- 1. A complete application package includes the three-page application and a Substitute W-9 form.
- 2. Applications may be mailed to the following address:

NC Department of Transportation Office of Civil Rights 1511 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-1511

OR

Fax: 919-733-3584

- 3. Applications must be completed in their entirety, **signed and notarized**. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Use N/A if not applicable.
- 4. Notarized applications sent through electronic media must be converted and submitted in .pdf format. Electronic submissions and faxed applications will be accepted if the notary seal is ink-stamped rather than embossed.
- 5. If the firm meets the eligibility requirements, the certification date will be date set based on the date the signatures are validated by the notary.

Changes to Information

1. Information Change Request Form

Submit an Information Change Request Form to the SPSF Certification Officer for any change in information of the firm in circumstances affecting a firm's ability to meet size, independence, profitability status, or any other requirements of this program, or any change in the information provided in the application form, within 30 days of the occurrence of the change.

2. Substitute W-9 Form

Firms that submit a request for changes to the firm's or owner's federal tax identification number shall submit such change on the Department's Substitute W-9 form.

Certification Renewal

Each year on the anniversary of the original SPSF certification, the SPSF is required to submit a new application that declares the business continues to meet the certification standards of this program. As a courtesy, the Department will send a reminder letter by US postal service or email approximately thirty days (30) prior to the anniversary date. However, the SPSF is responsible for submitting the new forms by the anniversary date whether or not a reminder letter is received.

The Department will wait 30 days for a response from the SPSF.

- 1. If documentation has not been received by the anniversary date, the firm's certification will be removed.
- 2. If the appropriate documentation is received prior to the anniversary date, the Department will review the information to determine if the firm meets the eligibility standards.

If the firm does not meet eligibility standards for the application year, the firm's certification will be removed effective on the original anniversary date. The Department will prepare a "Denial" or "Decertification" notification outlining the reason(s) for denial or decertification.

Firms that are found ineligible for participation, or have otherwise been prohibited from participation, may reapply for certification after the disqualifying condition ceases to exist (i.e. size, independence, for profit).

In the case where a firm is decertified for failure to cooperate because the requested forms were not submitted in a timely manner, the firm may reapply for certification at its discretion.

Complaint Form

If a third party has reason to believe that a SPSF is not eligible for the SPSF status, it may submit an SPSF Eligibility Complaint Form. The form may be downloaded at the following weblink: <u>https://connect.ncdot.gov/business/download/EligibilityComplaintForm.pdf</u> or found at the back of this document. After an investigation, the complainant will be notified by mail of the status and results of the investigation.

Third party complaint forms should be sent to the Contractual Services Unit at 1509 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1509, Attention SPSF Certification Officer.

If, based on notification by the firm of a change in its circumstances or other information that comes to the Department's attention, it is determined that there is cause to question the firm's eligibility in the program, the Department reserves the right to investigate the company for compliance with the program thru a Department initiated process.

Removal of SPSF Certification

A firm's SPSF certification may be removed for, but not limited to, any of the following reasons:

- 1. Exceeding the size standards;
- 2. Failing to cooperate with the Department's request for information;
- 3. Attempting to evade or subvert the intent of the SPSF program;
- 4. As directed by the Department.

If a firm's SPSF certification is removed, the firm will be notified by letter from the Department stating the reason for removal, the appeal rights, procedure, and the timeline for a response if the firm feels the removal is unjustified.

In the case where the firm has exceeded the limit set by SBA requirements for its industry, and documentation is available to substantiate the excess, the firm cannot appeal the decision by the Department to decertify as a SPSF.

A firm's loss of prequalification may not impact the SPSF certification. However, prequalification is necessary for a firm to perform work on any project awarded by the Department.

It should be noted that removal of the SPSF certification alone does not prevent a firm from working with NCDOT.

Appeals Process for Denial or Decertification of an SPSF

The appeals process may be initiated by the applicant upon receipt of an initial denial or decertification letter sent by the Department. The denial or decertification letter will explain to the applicant the reason for the denial or decertification, provide appeal procedures, and a timeline to appeal.

The applicant or firm must inform the Department **in writing** of the intent to appeal the denial or decertification decision **within 30 days** from the date shown on the denial or decertification letter or the decision will stand.

When the intent to appeal is received, the Department must give the firm an opportunity for an informal hearing, at which time the firm may respond to the decertification or denial in person and provide information and arguments concerning why it should remain or be certified.

Directory of Transportation Firms

The Department will maintain an electronic directory identifying all firms eligible to participate as a Small Professional Services Firm (SPSF). The on-line directory will be available at the following weblink: https://partner.ncdot.gov/VendorDirectory/default.html.

The SPSF will be responsible for reviewing and ensuring the information provided in the directory is accurate. For changes to the information displayed on the directory, the firm shall submit an **Information Change Request Form** to the Contractual Services Unit, Attention: SPSF Certification Officer.

Compliance and Enforcement

Any person who believes the Department has failed to comply with its obligations under these guidelines may file a written complaint with the State Contractual Services Engineer. The complaint shall be filed no later than ninety days (90) after the date of the alleged violation or on the date that the SPSF learned of a continuing course of conduct in violation of these guidelines. In response to the written request, the State Contractual Services Engineer may extend the time for filing, specifying in writing the reason why. Send Completed form to:

Contractual Services Unit - SPSF 1509 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-1509 ------Fax to (919) 733-3584



North Carolina Contractual Services Unit Small Professional Services Firm (SPSF) Contractor Certification For Official Use Only

Vendor # _____

1	Firm's Name				
2	Type of Business Entity	 Individual (use SSN) Sole Proprietorship (use SSN of LLC (use Fed ID#) 	or Fed ID#)	Partnership	(use Fed ID#)
3	Social Security No. or Federal ID # (Enter one based on your firm's business entity)				(Social Security #)
4	 Owner's Information If there are more than two owners, please attach additional sheets. Ownership percentages must total 100%. Gender and Ethnicity information is not eligibility criteria and is gathered for reporting purposes only Contact Information (Area codes required) 	E N		% Ownership: Ethnicity: Asian/Pacific African Amer Caucasian Am Hispanic Amer Native Ameri	ican nerican erican can Asian American
6	Address Information (Include street, city, state & zip code)	Physical Address:		Mailing Address:	
7	Financial Information	Previous Tax Year Receipts: \$		\$	Year 3: Receipts: \$

Small businesses, as defined by the Small Business Administration in Sector 54, are eligible for participation in the Department of Transportation's Small Professional Services Firm (SPSF) certification program. Information submitted is subject to verification by NCDOT. False statements could result in criminal penalties being imposed, including but not limited to the above firm being barred from doing business with NCDOT.

STATE OF:		
COUNTY OF		
I, A N	otary Public for said State, Cou	inty, do hereby certify that
per- due execution of the foregoing instrumer	sonally appeared before me this at.	a day and acknowledged the
Witness my hand and official seal, this _	day of	20 Seal }
(Signature Owner/Officer)	(Notary Signature)	_
(Title)	My commission expires	20

The North Carolina Department of Transportation uses Small Business Administration (SBA) size standards to determine whether a business entity is small and, thus, eligible for participation in the SPSF program. Size standards have been established for Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services under the North American

Industry Classification System (NAICS). The size standards are expressed either in number of employees or annual receipts in millions of dollars, and indicates the maximum allowed for a business and its affiliates to be considered small.

Please select the NAICS code for your industry by placing a check in the box. Verify your firm's average *receipts* for the three previous tax years before submitting this form. *Receipts* means "total income" (or in the case of a sole proprietorship, "gross income") plus "cost of goods sold" as these terms are defined and reported on Internal Revenue Service tax return forms.

NAICS		Size Standards	Size
Code	Sector 54 – Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	(in millions of	Standards
		dollars)	(in number of
541110	Offices of Lawyers	10.0	employees)
541191	Title Abstract and Settlement Offices	10.0	
541199		10.0	
541211	Offices of Certified Public Accountants	19.0	
541213		19.0	
541213	1	19.0	
541219	•	19.0	
541310		7.0	
541320		7.0	
541330	1	14.0	
541550	Except - Military & Aerospace Equipment and	35.0	
	Military Weapons	55.0	
	Except - Contracts and Subcontracts for Engineering	35.0	
	Services Awarded Under the National Energy Policy		
	Act of 1992		
	Except - Marine Engineering and Naval Architecture	35.0	
541340	Drafting Services	7.0	
	Except - Map Drafting	4.5	
541350		7.0	
541360	Geophysical Surveying and Mapping Services	14.0	
541370	Surveying and Mapping (except Geophysical) Services	14.0	
541380	Testing Laboratories	14.0	
541410	Interior Design Services	7.0	
541420	Industrial Design Services	7.0	
541430	1 0	7.0	
541490	Other Specialized Design Services	7.0	
541511	Custom Computer Programming Services	25.5	
541512	Computer Systems Design Services	25.5	
541513	Computer Facilities Management Services	25.5	
541519	Other Computer Related Services	25.5	
541611	Administrative Management and General Management	14.0	
	Consulting Services		
541612	·	14.0	
541613	Marketing Consulting Services	14.0	

NAICS	NAICS U. S. Industry Title	Size Standards	Size
Code	Sector 54 – Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	(in millions of	Standards
	(Continued)	dollars)	(in number of
			employees)
541614	Process, Physical Distribution, and Logistics Consulting	14.0	
	Services		
541618	Other Management Consulting Services	14.0	
541620	Environmental Consulting Services	14.0	
541690	Other Scientific and Technical Consulting Services	14.0	
541711	Research and Development in Biotechnology		500
541712	Research and Development in the Physical, Engineering, and		500
	Life Sciences		
	(except Biotechnology)		
541720	Research and Development in the Social Sciences and	19.0	
	Humanities		
541810	Advertising Agencies	14.0	
541820	Public Relations Agencies	14.0	
541830	Media Buying Agencies	14.0	
541840	Media Representatives	14.0	
541850	Display Advertising	14.0	
541860	Direct Mail Advertising	14.0	
541870	Advertising Material Distribution Services	14.0	
541890	Other Services Related to Advertising	14.0	
541910	Marketing Research and Public Opinion Polling	14.0	
541921	Photography Studios, Portrait	7.0	
541922	Commercial Photography	7.0	
541930	Translation and Interpretation Services	7.0	
541940	Veterinary Services	7.0	
541990	All Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	14.0	

VENDOR REGISTRATION FORM Vendor #— NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Pursuant to Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Regulations, vendors must furnish their Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) to the State. If this number is not provided, you may be subject to a 20% withholding on each payment. To avoid this 20% withholding and to insure that accurate tax information is reported to the Internal Revenue Service and the State, please use this form to provide the requested information exactly as it appears on file with the IRS.

INDIVIDUAL AND SOLE PROPRIETOR:	ENTER NAME AS SHOWN ON SOCIAL SECURITY CARD
CORPORATION OR PARTNERSHIP:	ENTER YOUR LEGAL BUSINESS NAME

NAME:			
MAILING ADDRESS: STREET/PC) BOX:		
CITY, STATE, ZIP:			
DBA / TRADE NAME (IF APPLIC	ABLE):		
BUSINESS DESIGNATION:	INDIVIDUAL (use Social Security No.)	SOLE PROPRIETER	(use SS No. or Fed ID No.)
	CORPORATION (use Federal ID No.)	PARTNERSHIP (use	Federal ID No.)
	ESTATE/TRUST (use Federal ID no.)	STATE OR LOCAL	GOVT. (use Federal ID no.)
	OTHER / SPECIFY		
SOCIAL SECURITY NO.	-	-	(Social Security #)
OR ED. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATIO			(Employer Identification #
	AYMENTS ARE MADE TO AN ADDRESS OTHE	R THAN THE ONE LISTE	D ABOVE:
REMIT TO ADDRESS: STREET	/ PO BOX:		
CITY, STATE, ZIP:			
information below will in no way vendors doing business with NC	Substantiation of the second s	sole purpose is to collect answer that best fits your	statistical data on those firm's group definition.
What is your firm's gender?	refer Not to Answer, Male, Female; Disabl	ed Owned Business? 🔲 F	refer Not to Answer, 🗌 Yes, 🗌 No
IRS Certification Under penalties of perjury, I c	ertify that:		
2. I am not subject to backu by the IRS that I am subje has notified me that I am	s form is my correct taxpayer identification an p withholding because: (a) I am exempt from ect to backup withholding as a result of a failu no longer subject to backup withholding, and ding a U.S. resident alien).	backup withholding, or (t	
	r consent to any provision of this document of rtification instructions please see IRS FORM		
NAME (Print or Type)		TTLE (Print or Type)	
SIGNATURE		DATE	PHONE NUMBER



For Official Use Only

Fax to (919) 733-3584

Small Professional Services Firm Program Information Change Request

Vendor # _____

Use this form to update information that is contained in the source database and displayed on the Contractor Directory. The firm's owner must approve all changes.

1	Name of Firm				
2	Contact Information (Including area code) (Indicate changes to information by adding <u>New</u> next to the entry)	Fax Number:			
		CURRENT INFORMATI	ON	CHANGE TO:	
3	Contact Name				
4	Type of Business Entity	 Sole Proprietorship Partnership Individual Corporation Other:		 Sole Proprietorship Partnership Individual Corporation Other:	
5	Federal Tax ID (or SSN)				
6	Change in Ownership (add % of Ownership for each individual)	Name of Owner 1: Name of Owner 2: Name of Owner 3: Name of Owner 4:	%	Name of Owner 2: Name of Owner 3:	% %
7	Firm's Mailing Address				
8	Street Address				
	(if different from above)				
9	NCDOT Work Codes				
	(if applicable)				
10	NAICS Codes				
	(if applicable)				

I declare under penalty of perjury that the information provided on this form is true and correct.

Signature of Majority Owner ____

_____Date (*mm/dd/yyyy*) ____



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA Small Professional Services Firm Program SPSF Eligibility Complaint Form

Send completed form to: Office of Equal Opportunity & Workforce Services 1511 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-1511

I have reason to believe that	(enter	name of firm)
does not meet the eligibility standards for a Small Professional Services I	Firm.	I believe this
firm is ineligible for the following reasons:		

I understand that I must have this form notarized before submitting it to your office and that my confidentiality will be maintained, unless otherwise required to be disclosed by law, until the end of the forthcoming investigation of this complaint.

(Signature)

(Date)

NOTE – AFFIDAVIT MUST BE NOTARIZED

STATE OF:	_		
COUNTY OF	_		
I, A 1	Notary Public for said State, Coun	ty, do hereby co	ertify that
pe due execution of the foregoing instrume	rsonally appeared before me this d ent.	ay and acknow	ledged the
Witness my hand and official seal, this	day of	20	_ Seal }
(Signature Owner/Officer)	(Notary Signature)		
(Title)	My commission expires		20