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Women-Owned Businesses – Some Resources

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Although women-owned businesses are growing in number and importance, they continue to face a variety of challenges. In the Commonwealth and beyond, there are many resources available to women looking to grow their networks and companies.

In addition to legal advice, our clients often ask us about these opportunities. Here are just a few of the organizations which we believe might be helpful for all kinds of women-owned businesses.

The Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office (SDO)

In Massachusetts, women-owned and operated businesses can obtain certification through the Supplier Diversity Office (SDO). Women certified through this program are applying as "Women Business Enterprises" (or "WBEs"). The requirements can be seen on their website or on the SDO Application Checklist. Specifically, the eligible principal must own 51% of the company, run the day-to-day operations of the company, show all mandatory licensing, and, if there are field operations, must be able to direct them. Perhaps the greatest benefit of SDO certification is that it enhances your changes of being awarded public contracts as well as work with some private companies who have affirmative purchasing programs.

Women Entrepreneurs Boston (WE BOS)

WE BOS is a Boston organization launched by Mayor Walsh and John Barros, Boston's chief of economic development, which seeks to support women entrepreneurs. Boston's new Citywide Small Business Plan specifically calls for expanding WE BOS and for an increased, strategic focus on minority, women, and immigrant entrepreneurs. To support this mission, WE BOS hosts events and grants a number of tuition-free fellowships to Babson College's Center for Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership (CWEL).

Women's Business Enterprise National Council ("WBENC")



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The Women's Business Enterprise National Council ("WBENC") is the largest third-party certifier of businesses owned, controlled, and operated by women in the United States. The goal of the WBENC is to facilitate the development of women-owned businesses. Its website lays out certification benefits, which are primarily access, networking, and promotional opportunities. These opportunities are business dependent and are not tailored for every business – corporate, retail, and government contracts can be larger than many small businesses can handle.

Center for Women & Enterprise ("CWE")

The Center for Women & Enterprise ("CWE") is a regional partner for the WBENC. It focuses on helping women at all levels of the business world through education, training, and technical assistance. There are networking opportunities as well, including a popular annual conference.

US Small Business Administration – Women-Owned Division

The US Small Business Administration ("SBA") has a Women-Owned division which has the goal of expanding the number of industries where women-owned small businesses are able to compete for business with the federal government. If your business is the right size, this is an alternative way to obtain government contracts. WBENC, above, is an approved Third Party Certifier for the Women Owned Small Business certification as part of the SBA's Federal Contracting Program.

The first step to taking advantage of many of these opportunities is certification. Rich May, P.C. has a long and successful history of assisting businesses with all of their corporate matters from formation, to raising capital, to structuring acquisitions of stock. Our team can help women entrepreneurs to achieve their goals.

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