

DRAFT: FOR USE BY AGENCIES ANNOUNCEMENT

Dear Business Owner:

_____ (date)

This letter is sent to announce major changes in the Commonwealth's Procurement Program and to make you aware of how important these changes can be to your business.

Governor Mark Warner has initiated important enhancements to his SWAM Initiative. You will remember that the SWAM Program was established to provide enhanced procurement opportunities to small businesses and to businesses owned by women and minorities (SWAM). While that program has shown great success in all contracting areas, the Governor in recognizing the importance of small businesses in the state's economy and the need to sustain and grow them, has approved additional changes that will further enhance and extend the opportunities for SWAM businesses to do business with state agencies and institutions of the Commonwealth.

These changes include a statewide aspirational goal of 40 percent of all procurement dollars for SWAM businesses; a detailed SWAM Procurement Plan by each agency and institution; changes to the Procurement procedures that are expected to greatly enhance the ability of SWAM businesses to participate in contract opportunities; and a certification requirement for businesses participating in the program.

It is important to know that **your business is not required to be certified to do business with Virginia**. To participate and be counted, though, in the SWAM Program, your business must be certified. This is different from your registration on the state's eVA system. All businesses registered with eVA as small businesses or businesses owned by women or minorities will lose these designation unless the business is certified. To continue to carry these designations, businesses must be certified by October 1, 2004. Certification applications for Small Businesses, Women-Owned Businesses, and Minority-Owned Businesses have been made shorter and easier to complete and it is free. Assistance is available, should you need it, from several state agencies including the Department of Minority Business Enterprise and the Department of Business Assistance. Purchasing officials in all state agencies can also direct you to the proper resource for any assistance you may require.

The enhanced SWAM Program offers greater opportunities for your business to do business with the state. Your certification as a SWAM vendor can be an important marketing tool to agencies and institutions working to expand the number of vendors in their purchasing pool. In addition to the important role it plays in securing state contracts, certification of your business as small, women-owned, or minority-owned may be of assistance to you in the private sector and with local governments. Many private-sector businesses and local governments in Virginia have established purchasing programs to provide greater opportunities for small businesses, encourage diversity among their suppliers, and expand the pool of businesses with who they do business. Increased numbers of vendors, for both the government and private sectors, can mean increased savings and improved quality.

We encourage you to participate in the Commonwealth's SWAM Program, get certified, and begin to take advantage of the opportunities certification will afford for more contracting and subcontracting opportunities with state agencies and institutions.

Certification applications are available through the Department of Minority Business Enterprise at 800-223-0671 in Virginia, 804-786-6585 outside Virginia, or online at www.dmbe.Virginia.gov.

