

North Dakota Department of Transportation

DBE NEWSLETTER

— March 13, 2026 —

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Advertisements

Advertisements are not required. The Bid Opening Sign-In System and Advertisement System have been disabled until further notice.

The North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) will consider every request for reasonable accommodation to provide:

- An accessible meeting facility or other accommodation for people with disabilities.
- Language interpretation for people with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- Translations of written material necessary to access NDDOT programs and information.

To request accommodations, contact Heather Christianson, Civil Rights Division, NDDOT at 701-328-2978 or civilrights@nd.gov TTY users may use Relay North Dakota at 711 or 1-800-366-6888.

Upcoming Bid Letting Meeting

[Click Here](#) to access the NDDOT website where you will find the link to join the next meeting.

[Click Here](#) to view the slides from the February 6 DBE Industry Update Meeting.



Announcements...

DBE Firms: Reminder to Submit Your PN and PNW by May 31, 2026

North Dakota DBE firms certified prior to October 3, 2025 are encouraged to submit their Personal Narrative (PN) and Personal Net Worth (PNW) statements as soon as possible to complete the required reevaluation under the [DBE Interim Final Rule \(IFR\)](#). These documents are essential for determining continued eligibility in the DBE Program.

Firms that do not submit their PN and PNW by May 31, 2026 will become temporarily ineligible to be counted toward DBE participation on federal-aid projects nationwide.

The DBE Directory will reopen on June 1, 2026, and only firms that have completed the reevaluation and been found eligible will appear when it goes live.

Submitting early ensures that your firm remains active and visible when the updated Directory is published.

Once ready, please upload your documents to the open Q&A section of your Certification Record in the Certification and Compliance System.

How to Access the Q&As in the Certification and Compliance System:

- To complete the Q&A from the email link, here are some steps you can follow:
 1. Login
 2. On the left menu, click 'View' >> My Certifications
 3. Click the 'Respond' Link to the right of your application (the bottom of the Applications section of Cert List)
 4. Click on the Q&A tab (located at the top of the screen), then the 'Answer' link
 5. Enter an answer in the "Answer" text box
 6. Click on the 'Attach File' button
 7. Click Browse >> double click on your document >> click Attach File button >> and Close Window
 8. Select a document format
 9. Click on Next/Review and Submit
- To access the Q&A if you don't have the link from the email (from the Dashboard):
 1. Go to *My Certifications*
 2. Scroll down to Applications
 3. Find the latest ND Application and click View
 4. At the top of that page should be tabs one of which is Q&A
 5. Click the Q&A tab to see the latest Q&As from NDDOT

If you choose not to proceed with reevaluation, please submit a written withdrawal to civilrights@nd.gov.

Announcements...

Subcontractor Prequalification Reminder: Ensure your subcontractor prequalification is complete in the CCS. You can do that [Here](#). This is required to bid as a subcontractor since the DBE program is on hold.

Subcontractor Registration

SUBCONTRACTOR REGISTRATION is required annually (expiring December 31) for contractors who wish to be approved as a subcontractor and are not currently pre-qualified to bid as a prime contractor or certified as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE).



SUBCONTRACTOR REGISTRATION Application

Search Registered Vendors

ECommerce for DBEs: Expanding Your Business Online

Leveraging eCommerce is essential for businesses aiming to thrive in the modern market, where most business happens online. As a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), establishing an online presence can be a transformative step towards achieving sustainable growth and long-term success. Modern eCommerce offers unprecedented opportunities to increase awareness of your brand, expand into new marketplaces, and retain your existing customers. In this article, we will look at a few useful strategies you can add into your eCommerce strategy to increase its effectiveness and expand your business.



Identify and Track Your Customers

Different people engage with the internet in different ways, so if you want to maximize your business's ability to operate online, you need to understand the types of people who will be engaging with you. Once you know who is engaging with your business, you can keep them in mind when developing your eCommerce strategy. There are a lot of useful tools available when it comes to developing awareness of your customer base and their preferences, but a few general methods to keep in mind are the use of surveys, where you can ask customers directly to provide information about themselves and their experience with your business, demographic information from search engines that link to your business, which can give you general information on the people finding your business and the paths they take to get there, and engagement tracking, which can give you insights into the effectiveness of different types of content you produce and products you offer. Maintaining a variety of information sources will help you develop a more well-rounded picture of your audience and your business's online presence, which you can then use to your advantage when refining your eCommerce strategy.

Build a Useful Website

The most effective method of expanding your reach online as a DBE is to develop a useful website. This gives you presence on search engines, gives you a space you can link to on your business cards and emails, and generally provides you with a space where you can market yourself however you see fit. Your website should be customized for your business, but as a rule you will generally want to design your website with three key ideas in mind: it should be easy to navigate, load quickly, and feel consistent with your brand. Always keep your intended user in mind when designing your website and ask yourself how you can make it the most convenient for them to use while making the strongest impression of your company and its offerings in their mind.

Develop a Social Media Presence

Social media can provide an incredibly cost-effective method of increasing awareness of your brand. It allows you to advertise your company at a much lower cost than traditional advertising, and if you can gain traction, it can dramatically expand your reach. As you develop your eCommerce strategy, experiment with as many social media platforms as possible. Different platforms have different audiences and promote different styles of communication, and you may be surprised by which ones best support your business.



Once you've established which platforms produce the best results for you, you can tailor your content with those platforms in mind. However, it is worth maintaining a presence on as many platforms as you can, even if they produce uneven results. By increasing the number of platforms you are on, you increase your odds of gaining traction, protect yourself from disruptions on a single platform, and reduce the potential threat of a competitor gaining unexpected appeal on a platform that they can monopolize because you aren't there.

Produce Non-Marketing Content

Producing content that doesn't explicitly advertise your services, such as informational content about your industry or causes your company supports, can be a great addition to your eCommerce strategy. While it may not bring in as many immediate sales as more traditional advertising, it increases awareness of your brand and builds trust in your business by positioning you as an expert in your industry. For example, if your company specializes in managing paving work, discussing the dangers that poorly maintained roads on public safety can simultaneously raise public awareness of the value of paving projects and make your company feel like a trusted source of information and support. If that information were shared around as a blog, each share makes it more likely that someone in a position to hire your company to manage an upcoming paving project will see your content.

Be More than Text

While most online communication is text based, text is frequently not the most effective method of communication. Wherever possible, adding pictures, audio, or videos to your online content can dramatically increase its effectiveness. A video showing your company's products will generally be more effective than a text blurb. A social media post about how proud you are of your company's work on a local public works project can be significantly enhanced by photos of your employees in action, an "About Us" page on your website with headshots of the key personnel it describes can help users connect with the as they read. Adding audio and video content wherever you can boosts engagement and improves retention, which directly leads to increased profits. It can also be a great way to improve the accessibility of your online offerings by allowing people who struggle to read fine print on a screen to listen to a reading of your webpage or watch a video demonstration of your product.



Design with Mobile in Mind

Most online transactions currently happen on mobile devices, and the disparity between desktop and mobile users is growing. When designing your content, whether it be a website, a blog, a mailing list, or a social media post, making it easy to access and navigate from mobile devices will lead to increased engagement. Even if your business doesn't intend to get sales directly from those offerings, you still benefit from the ease of access to information about your company. If you attend a trade show, for example, it's much easier for someone who has just interacted with you to search your company's name on their phone and look at your offerings immediately than it is for them to remember your name and look you up a few days later when they get home.

You can use eCommerce as a powerful pathway to broaden your reach, strengthen customer relationships, and compete effectively in today's digital-first marketplace. By understanding your audience, building a user-friendly website, leveraging social media, creating valuable non-marketing content, diversifying your media formats, and optimizing for mobile users, you can create a strong, adaptable online presence that fuels growth. With a strategic and consistent approach, your business can transform its digital footprint into a lasting competitive advantage that opens doors to new opportunities and long-term success.

Upcoming Events/Training

Mar.
17

Advanced Negotiation Strategy to Protect Profit and Close Stronger Deals

Webinar

Tuesday, March 17, 2026 | 12:00 P.M. CT | Cost: \$15

[Learn More >](#)

Mar.
25

Government Contracting Federal Finding & Applying

Webinar

Wednesday, March 25, 2026 | 6:30 P.M. CT | Cost: \$10

[Learn More >](#)

Mar.
26

Prevailing Wage Essentials

Webinar

Thursday, March 26, 2026 | 1:00 P.M. CT | Cost: Free

[Learn More >](#)

Mar.
31

Heat Stress Readiness: Preparing for OSHA's HIIP Rule

Webinar

Tuesday, March 31, 2026 | 1:00 P.M. CT | Cost: Free

[Learn More >](#)

Apr.
7

Doing Business with the States

Webinar

Tuesday, April 7, 2026 | 9:00 A.M. CT | Cost: Free

[Learn More >](#)

Apr.
9

27th Annual SADBOC Government Procurement Fair

Heritage Center of Brooklyn Center | 6155 Earle Brown Drive, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430

Thursday, April 9, 2026 | 9:00 A.M. CT | Cost: Free

[Learn More >](#)



Did You Know...

Assistance and Support Materials

Project Solutions, Inc., the DBE Supportive Services Consultant, offers one-on-one assistance to firms needing help drafting their Personal Narrative.

To support your preparation, the following resources are available on the [NDDOT DBE website under Interim Final Rule \(IFR\) – Information](#):

- Personal Narrative Workshop recording
- PowerPoint slides
- Workbook and writing guidance

These materials provide step-by-step help for completing the Personal Narrative and are recommended for all firms beginning their reevaluation.

To schedule time with a consultant, email dbes@projectsolutionsinc.com.

How to Be a Better Negotiator

Whether you're discussing terms with suppliers, negotiating contracts with clients, or seeking investment, negotiation is an essential skill that small business owners use constantly. That doesn't change the fact that for many, negotiation is a challenging, anxiety-inducing experience. It can be disheartening to feel that your business is impeded by its weaknesses; however, negotiation is a skill that can be acquired. With adequate practice and preparation, you can approach your next negotiation with a composed and assured demeanor, confident in your capability to achieve your objectives. In this article, we will look at a few ideas you can use to step up your negotiating game. While we will focus primarily on negotiations with potential clients, the ideas can be applied to any negotiation.



Do Your Research

Going into a negotiation unprepared will leave you open to surprises, less likely to be able to respond to requests specifically, and more likely to make mistakes. Remember: strong negotiation starts before the actual meeting. It is essential to commence your preparation by gathering pertinent information. There are three critical categories of information that consistently hold importance and offer a valuable structure for your research: understanding your client, analyzing your competition, and assessing yourself.

Perhaps as obvious as it is important, you need to know what your client wants to succeed in negotiating with them. As you begin your preparation, try to understand what your client really wants out of this interaction, what fears and goals they have that led them to the negotiating table, and what they are likely to expect to give in exchange for reaching those goals or escaping those fears.

Once you know what the client wants, you can investigate what competition you will face. Maintaining an active awareness of local competitors is good practice generally but developing a specific list of competitors for each deal can help guide your negotiation tactics. When looking at your competitors, ask what they can offer your negotiation partner, what price they will likely charge for that, and how important this deal is for their business.

Finally, you need to understand your own business to succeed in a negotiation. Reserve this section of your research for the final stage, as understanding your client's needs and how your competitors may meet those needs can provide valuable insights into your own capabilities. When looking at your own business before a negotiation, determine how you can help the client reach their goals, what unique value you have that separates you from your competition, and what you want to gain from this potential deal.



Prepare Your Approach

Now that you understand the positions of the groups involved in this negotiation, prepare a few strategies ahead of time. Work through how you will address your potential client's needs, demonstrate that your business is the best solution, and ensure that you meet your goals. Note that it's strategies, plural. Negotiations are conversational, and they may not move in the way you want. Preparing multiple approaches helps you stay adaptable and makes it more likely that, however the conversation moves, you'll be ready.

Maintain The Proper Mindset

Mentality can make all the difference in any conversation. As you enter the negotiating room, make sure you're in the right headspace. To achieve the best results, you will want to be empathetic, personable, and assertive in your negotiating.

Maintaining an empathetic mindset can go a long way to improving your performance. Being able to read the room and adapt to the changing atmosphere can help you keep clients engaged, and putting energy into understanding the feelings of those around you will enable you to address those feelings more directly. This should not be a purely intuitive process, though. Giving others a chance to speak both helps keep them engaged and allows you to glean insight into their needs, while seeing the negotiation from their perspective improves your ability to respond. Ask questions, listen to the answers, and adapt your approach to respond specifically to the people with whom you are negotiating.

It's not enough to just understand your clients, however. You also need to relate to them. People value connections, so giving potential clients a chance to see you as a human being rather than just a voice for a company can give you a big boost in negotiations. Be friendly, engage in conversation that isn't just about the current transaction, and create genuine connections with your clients, and you will encourage them to see you as a friend who cares about them and can be trusted.

Finally, be assertive. When you are speaking, speak confidently. Be excited about what you can offer and assured of the value of that offer for the client. Simultaneously, don't undersell your product or undervalue your work for the sake of ingratiating yourself to your clients. Be honest about what you can provide and what you feel you deserve in return. However, never present yourself as arrogant or confrontational. This is not an invitation to get into arguments or expound upon your greatness to the point of alienating your clients, but to speak with conviction to the ways you know you can help. Position yourself as a solution to their problems, not a source of conflict.

Focus on Solutions and Mutual Growth

When negotiating, it's important to remember that both sides fundamentally want the same thing. You both want to come to an agreement, so focus the discussion first on their problems and your ability to provide solutions. If the conversation threatens to devolve into an argument, realign it based on your clients' end goals and your ability to help reach them. This can help reduce negativity and defuse aggression, maintaining the productivity of the discussion. Don't be afraid to make compromises to reach a deal that meets those goals. Negotiations aren't competitive, they're collaborative. You both win together and will likely both need to make some amount of compromise to achieve that win. Never position yourself as an adversary. Always be a source of support and cooperation.



The focus of a negotiation should never be entirely on the other party, however. Mutual satisfaction is vital to a good partnership. Make it clear that you benefit from this deal as well, and don't compromise your bottom line for the sake of meeting unrealistic expectations. If you truly provide the best solution for your client, they should be willing to compromise to achieve that solution as well. If that isn't a possibility, remember that it is okay to walk away from a deal that is unrealistic or unhealthy for your business. If price is the main pain point of a negotiation, consider alternative solutions like negotiating the amount of service you can provide within the client's budget rather than demanding a higher price for the full package.