



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 16, 2020

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**GREAT LAKES WATER AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS ADOPTS
BUSINESS INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY PROGRAM**

- *Increases opportunities for local small and disadvantaged businesses within GLWA's service area to do business with the Authority*
- *Assists GLWA expanding its pool of skilled resources, supporting economic development throughout the region, and providing competitive pricing in its procurements*

DETROIT —The Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) Board of Directors has approved a dynamic new Business Inclusion and Diversity (BID) Program for the state of Michigan's largest water and wastewater utility. The program is designed to assist GLWA in expanding its pool of skilled resources, support economic development throughout the region, and ensure sustainability in its procurements. The development of the BID Program was initiated by GLWA's board and launched by the utility in less than five months.

"GLWA was founded on the principle of affordability and commitment to supporting the region it serves," said Dr. Beverly Walker-Griffea, Board Chair and the GLWA board representative appointed by the state of Michigan. "In keeping with this, the Board felt it was imperative to create a program to support local business, especially during this time of great economic uncertainty created by the coronavirus pandemic. I commend the GLWA administration for taking quick action on the Board's request and developing such a robust program."

The BID Program amends the Authority's Procurement Policy to require vendors to submit, for all solicitations budgeted at \$1 million or more, a Business Inclusion and Diversity Plan that addresses their efforts to include Minority-owned Business Enterprise (MBE), Woman-owned Business Enterprise (WBE), Small Business Enterprise (SBE), and Disadvantaged Businesses (DBE).

As a part of their plan, vendors will be required to ensure maximum participation by diverse and inclusive businesses in a manner, and to the degree, that it equals or exceeds standards for its other customers and/or clients. They will also be required to provide methods to maximize opportunity for business inclusion and reporting methods that indicate firms invited, firms recommended for award and other pertinent information.

Credit in the solicitation process will also be given for three different categories: 1) business presence in the state of Michigan, 2) business presence within an area that GLWA serves, and 3) businesses classified as an Economically Disadvantaged Territory Area Enterprise (those located in a municipality designated as having one of the five lowest median household incomes in that respective county as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau every five years).

“Regionalism works best when we can bring together the diverse perspectives reflective of those we serve,” said Sue F. McCormick, Chief Executive Officer, GLWA. “Creating the BID Program not only generates greater competition and opportunities for southeast Michigan small businesses, but we fully expect it to foster innovation and collaboration with GLWA and its member partners.”

The BID Program builds upon the Small Business Initiative that GLWA launched in 2018, a highlight of which is a Strategic Alliance Memorandum between the Authority and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). This strategic alliance between the SBA and GLWA aims to strengthen and expand small business development in the GLWA service area. Specifically, it allows GLWA and the federal agency to work together to match small business owners with future procurement opportunities within GLWA.

“Aiding in the growth and expansion of all small businesses, especially those in emerging markets, is at the core of SBA’s mission and our ongoing work with GLWA will provide additional support for this new BID Program,” said Laketa Henderson, Michigan Acting District Director, SBA. “The SBA guarantees surety bonds which in turn guarantee bids, performance and payment on contracts. These surety bonds can enable small businesses, either working directly as a prime or indirectly as a sub-contractor, to be more competitive.”

Next steps in the launch of the program include:

- Hiring a BID Program Manager to oversee the program. A full job description for this position is expected to be published on the Careers page of GLWA’s website in January 2021;
- Conducting focus groups with current GLWA vendors to understand their diversity and inclusion program, as well as professional and other associations representing the MBE, WBE, SBE business communities to seek their input on getting the word out about the new program. For more information on GLWA’s small business efforts and full vendor information, including how to register as a potential vendor with GLWA at no cost, visit: <https://www.glwater.org/vendors/doing-business-with-glwa/>.

The BID Program is expected to fully launch in February 2021. Questions regarding the BID Program can be sent to GLWAVendorOutreach@glwater.org.

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About the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA)

The Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) is the provider-of-choice for drinking water services to nearly 40 percent, and efficient and effective wastewater services to nearly 30 percent, of Michigan's population. With the Great Lakes as source water, GLWA is uniquely positioned to provide those it serves with water of unquestionable quality. GLWA also has the capacity to extend its services beyond its 88 member partner communities. As part of its commitment to water affordability, the Authority offers a Water Residential Assistance Plan to assist low-income households in participating member communities throughout the system. GLWA's board includes one representative each from Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne counties, two representatives from the city of Detroit and one appointed by the Michigan governor to represent member partner communities outside of the tri-county area.