

CERTIFICATION OPENS DOORS TO OPPORTUNITIES

"Don't spend time beating on a wall, hoping to transform it into a door." - Coco Chanel

Certification gives you direct access to sales contracts with corporations and governments that are actively seeking to diversify their supply chains. Many have formal supplier diversity programs in place to purchase from minority-owned businesses, including women, Aboriginal or visible minorities. In fact, companies like Walmart, Microsoft, IBM, UPS, BMW and Coca-Cola purchase billions of dollars each year from certified minority-owned businesses.



Alicia Woods, Owner
Covergalls

The Business Women in International Trade (BWIT) program offers direct access to these opportunities through women-focused trade missions to supplier diversity conferences each year. Alicia Woods took part in BWIT's June 2016 trade mission to the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) National Conference and Business Fair in Orlando, Florida.

"I was amazed at the opportunities available through certification," explains Woods, who owns Covergalls, a women's workwear company. "The BWIT team introduced me to several large companies with supplier diversity programs."

Covergalls secured a product trial through ExxonMobil and is currently in talks with Monsanto. "I'm thrilled because it means getting our product in the hands of the customer. Certification is one step closer to signing a deal."

To qualify for certification, your business must be 51% or more women, Aboriginal or visible minority-owned and operated. Certifying bodies also offer training, mentorship and advice:

- **Women-owned**—WBE Canada wbecanada.org; WEConnect International in Canada weconnectinternational.org
- **Aboriginal and visible minority-owned**—Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council camsc.ca

Trade Commissioner Neil Robinson has worked with a number of women-owned companies like Covergalls. He says that doing business with corporations involves a great deal of preparation.

"It all starts with understanding your product and your value proposition. Alicia's coveralls are designed for the growing number of women who work in male-dominated industries. That's unique," explains Robinson. "You also need to target your pitch. Get to know the company's supply chains and how you fit in. Tailor your sales and marketing tools to position yourself for success."



Huiping Zhang, President
wintranslation

Like Covergalls, Ottawa's wintranslation has a unique offering. The company translates into 100 languages, and specializes in Canada's Aboriginal languages. With 500 translators on her roster, President Huiping Zhang is doing business in the U.S. and Europe. She says that being certified as a women-owned business is a huge asset—and something she highly recommends.

"It opens doors. There's a large community of certified businesses and corporate customers with supplier diversity programs," says Zhang. "We take part in BWIT's women-focused trade missions and supplier diversity conferences. Each time, we make more contacts and leave with contracts. It's been a great relationship and business building tool."

“ SOUND ADVICE: SPREAD YOUR WINGS



"HCMWorks is a contingent workforce service provider offering our clients access to talent, expertise, technology and processes that reduce workforce costs, while increasing recruitment efficiencies. We started in business with a \$1.5 million contract. We had several flagship Canadian accounts, but our revenue became stagnant. Expanding to the U.S. was one

of our best decisions. Our growth has far surpassed our expectations. We deal with U.S. decision-makers, which has opened the door to their international operations. We are now a \$155 million company.

"My advice? Look to the U.S. Take advantage of the Fortune 500 supplier diversity opportunities. These set-aside programs for women and minority-owned businesses create a platform for you to compete against larger suppliers."

Julia Fournier, President & CEO, HCMWorks
Ottawa, ON