



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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January 12, 2026

To: All NJDOT Certified DBEs and ACDBEs
From: Disadvantaged and Small Business Programs Unit
Subject: Request for DBE Personal Narrative

All,

Effective October 3, 2025, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) issued an **Interim Final Rule (IFR)** that removed the presumption of social and economic disadvantage based on race and sex. In accordance with this IFR, the New Jersey Unified Certification Program (NJUCP), which includes the **New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)**, NJ TRANSIT (NJT), and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ), is required to reevaluate the eligibility of all currently certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) and Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (ACDBEs) under the revised certification standards. See the [IFR](#) and the [USDOT DBE IFR FAQ](#) for guidance on Personal Narratives and additional information.

To be re-evaluated under the new program rules, each individual Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Owner (SEDO) in your firm, making up at least 51% of ownership, is required to submit a personal narrative that demonstrates individualized and specific instances of social and economic disadvantage from any point in your life within American society. You may include any documentation that supports your claim of disadvantage with your personal narrative. This

narrative must describe how **economic hardship, systemic barriers, and/or denied opportunities** have impeded your **educational, employment, or business development efforts**, including your ability to obtain financing on terms comparable to those available to similarly situated, non-disadvantaged individuals. Your personal narrative must clearly explain how the identified impediments caused you economic harm, including a detailed description of the nature and extent of that harm.

You do not have to meet all categories of economic hardship, systemic barriers, and denied opportunities described in 49 CFR § 26.67; all evidence presented will be evaluated holistically. See [USDOT IFR FAQ](#) (Section C, Question 11).

The information provided must demonstrate that you are economically disadvantaged in fact when compared to similarly situated, non-disadvantaged individuals. **Please note that the incidents or experiences discussed in your personal narrative must not rely, in whole or in part, on race or sex.** In addition, each SEDO is required to submit a current Personal Net Worth (PNW) statement, including documentation to support each entry in the PNW.

To be reevaluated, you are requested to submit your personal narrative, a current PNW (including documentation to support each entry), and any other relevant financial documents you deem appropriate **within 30 days from the date of this letter (February 12, 2026)** through the NJDOT [Certification portal](#). Once you log into the system, click the “**Reevaluation**” tab and follow the instructions to submit your required documents.

Additionally, refer to the attachments below.

Attachments

- *Sample Response letter template on letterhead or with coversheet (if no letterhead available)*
- *Optional resources: List of free resources to help develop a personal narrative.*