



Frequently Asked Questions

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Where do I go if I have trouble with certify.SBA.gov?

First, check the Certify Knowledge Base (CKB), accessible [here](#), or by visiting [certify.SBA.gov](https://certify.sba.gov) and selecting the “Certify Knowledge Base” link. If the information you’re looking for is not available, you may email 8aquestions@sba.gov with questions about the 8(a) Program or contact the Certify Help Desk for technical assistance [here](#).

Where can I find resources to help me with my application?

You can find resources designed to help you with your application at the [Certify Knowledge Base](#) (CKB). Recordings and transcripts from most training sessions can also be found at the same link. Two key documents to review when completing your 8(a) application are the [Document Checklist](#) and [Quick Start Guide](#). You can search for local resources at [Get local assistance \(sba.gov\)](#) Quick Start Guide.

What is a UEI?

A unique entity identifier (UEI) is a 12-character alphanumeric identifier used to uniquely identify a specific entity. The UEI is used within SAM.gov and other government award and financial systems as a primary key to identify a unique entity. For more information about obtaining a UEI, visit <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>

What should I do if the information on my SAM.gov account is not complete/up to date?

If your SAM.gov profile needs to be updated, login to SAM.gov to make the change. Visit the [help](#) section of SAM.gov to request your login credentials, if needed.

Does Certify provide a template for documents it requests (examples: Profit and Loss form, Balance Sheet, etc.)

No, Certify does not provide templates at this time.

What accounting methods does the SBA typically acknowledge?

The SBA typically acknowledges generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and needs to review reliable financial statements as part of the initial eligibility review process. If you are not familiar with this terminology, we recommend reaching out [local](#)



[assistance](#) near you.

What are the Certify document upload requirements?

Documents uploaded into Certify must be saved as a PDF of 25MB or less and must not be password protected. Documents must be uploaded in response to the relevant question in the application questionnaires; you should not zip together multiple files. However, you can upload as many documents as you need in each document upload box for the relevant question; therefore, if you know that SBA will likely ask for additional documents based on your response, upload those in the same upload box.

Can I hire someone to help me complete my 8(a) application?

Yes, although companies are able and encouraged to submit your application in Certify without paying a third party, and resource partners are available to assist companies at no cost. However, you can hire someone to assist with your application; if you do, you must complete the [Signed Representative Information Form](#) as part of your application.

Note: As the business owner, you must be the person to register in Certify and submit your 8(a) initial application.

I am working with a company to complete their 8(a) application. How can I access their application in Certify?

Currently, there is no functionality in Certify for third-party consultants or SBA Resource Partners to be granted access to the system. SBA is aware that many companies utilize third-party consultants and SBA Resource Partners (SCOREs, PTACs, SBDCs and District Offices) for assistance with their 8(a) application submission, and we apologize for any inconvenience. Companies can print or save PDFs of the final “review” pages of each section of their application to show a third party for review prior to pressing sign and submit.

How do I send the Individual Contributor application to other people with a connection to my Company?

You will enter each contributor’s name and email address in the Individual Contributor section of your 8(a) application. Each contributor will receive an email with instructions on how to register in Certify to complete their application. You will not be able to submit



your application until all contributors have completed their portions of the application.

How will I know if my individual contributors have completed their portion of the application?

You will be able to see the status of your individual contributors' applications by the Individual Contributors section and reviewing the "Application Status" for each contributor. You can send an email reminder to any individual contributor if you see that one has not completed their portion.

How long does it typically take to hear back from the SBA after I submit my application?

After a 15-day screening phase to check your application for completeness, applications should be reviewed within 90 days after being accepted for processing.

I submitted my 8(a) application more than 15 days ago. Why haven't I received an update from the SBA?

Applications are reviewed on a first come first serve basis and will be completed as soon as possible.

I received an email notification telling me I have a message in Certify. What should I do next?

The SBA uses the Certify messaging feature as the sole method of communication between applicants and SBA. The email notification is to inform you that you have a new message about your application. Log in to certify.SBA.gov, access your 8(a) application, and review the Messages tab to view the message. The message may request information from you that is time-sensitive, so be sure to review as soon as possible to avoid processing delays.

Can I add attachments to messages I send to the SBA?

No. At this time, the messaging feature only allows a text response. If the SBA requests a document from you, then you will find that a section of the application has been unlocked for you to upload the requested document in response to that specific question.



Can I apply if I have an immediate family member who is another current or former 8(a) BD Program participant?

An applicant with an immediate family member who is another current or former 8(a) participant would be eligible for the program, unless:

- The businesses are connected by any common ownership or management, regardless of amount or position;
- The businesses have a contractual relationship that was not conducted at arm's length;
- The applicant shares facilities with the current or former participant; or
- The businesses operate in the same primary NAICS code and the applicant does not have management or technical experience in that primary NAICS code.

Can I apply if I have management or technical experience in the same primary NAICS code as an immediate family member's current or former 8(a)-certified firm?

Individuals applying in the same primary NAICS code as an immediate family member must have management or technical experience in that primary NAICS code—which could include experience working for an immediate family member's current or former firm.

Example:

- X Business seeks to apply to the 8(a) BD Program with a primary NAICS code in plumbing. X Business is 100 percent owned by A.
- Z Business—a former 8(a) participant with a primary NAICS code in general construction— is 100 percent owned by B (A's brother).
- For general construction jobs, Z Business has subcontracted plumbing work to X Business in the past at normal commercial rates. Subcontracting work at normal commercial rates would not prevent X Business from being admitted to the 8(a) BD Program. Therefore, X Business would be eligible to apply for the program.

Can an entity-owned business make an excessive withdrawal in the form of a pro rata distribution?

8(a) participants are prohibited from making withdrawals above the “excessive withdrawal amount” (as defined in the Federal Register). Exceptions to this rule include withdrawals from participants owned by tribes, Alaskan Native Corporations (ANCs), Native Hawaiian Organizations (NHOs), or Community Development Corporations (CDCs)—provided that the withdrawal is made for the benefit of the relevant entity or community, as opposed to exclusively benefitting a non-disadvantaged manager or owner. In other words, an individual can receive an amount that exceeds the excessive withdrawal limitation only where it is part of a pro rata distribution that is primarily intended to benefit the relevant native or disadvantaged community. Under this exception, entity-owned firms can make excessive withdrawals in the form of pro rata distributions paid to all shareholders—provided that the withdrawal does not adversely affect business development of the participant. This exception would still apply even if a non-disadvantaged minority owner received a payout that exceeded the excessive withdrawal amount. For example, if ANC-owned Participant Y seeks to distribute \$550,000 to the ANC and \$450,000 to non-disadvantaged individual A based on their 55 percent/45 percent ownership interests. Because the distribution is based on the pro rata share of ownership, this would not be considered an excessive withdrawal unless the SBA determined that Participant Y would be adversely affected.

If I become 8(a)-certified, when will I have to submit my business plan to the SBA?

Once certified, participants have 60 days to submit their business plan to the SBA.

Once admitted to the 8(a) BD Program, do I have to request SBA approval of a change of ownership?

Generally, yes—a participant must generally receive SBA approval for a change of ownership to ensure that one or more disadvantaged individuals continue to own and control the participant after the change. However, in a change of ownership request where an ANC/tribe merely reorganizes its ownership of a participant in the 8(a) BD Program by inserting or removing a wholly owned business entity between the ANC/tribe/CDC and the participant, the participant does not need to request a change of ownership from the SBA. Participants must notify the SBA of the change within 30 days of the transfer. The November 2020 ruling also eliminated the requirement for prior SBA

approval of the following changes of ownership that are unlikely to impact the disadvantaged individual's or entity's continued compliance with the majority ownership requirements of the program. Per the ruling, prior SBA approval is not needed where all non-disadvantaged individual (or entity) owners involved in the change of ownership own no more than 20 percent interest in the concern both before and after the transaction; and prior SBA approval is not needed where the disadvantaged individual (or entity) in control of the participant will increase the percentage of its ownership interest.