

What is an availability interview?

Keen Independent's availability analysis collects information from thousands of companies about the types of work they perform and regions in Montana where they can work. To collect this information, Customer Research International will conduct telephone interviews with transportation construction, engineering and related businesses in Montana. This effort will reach out beyond contractors and consultants already on MDT lists.

Customer Research International will collect the following information from a company:

- Qualifications and interest in working with MDT or with local governments as a prime contractor and as a subcontractor;
- Types, sizes and locations of transportation contracts the firm can perform;
- Race/ethnicity and gender of the business owner; and
- Insights into marketplace conditions and potential improvements to working with MDT and local agencies.

As an alternative, businesses can provide information about their firms through an online survey. The telephone interviews and online surveys will begin in late June 2015 and continue for about four weeks.

How will this data be used?

Once the availability interviews are complete, Keen Independent will analyze the number of minority-, women- and non-minority-owned firms available for different types of MDT prime contracts and subcontracts. Keen Independent will aggregate these results to develop overall availability figures for minority-owned firms (by group) and for white women-owned firms. The study team uses these availability results as benchmarks when evaluating the utilization of minority- and women-owned firms in MDT contracts.

Contact information will be added to existing MDT lists for future outreach; however comments received will not be associated with specific companies or individuals.

How will firms be selected to participate in an availability interview?

The study team will develop a list of businesses to be contacted for availability interviews through a combination of sources:

- Lists of firms that have identified themselves as being interested in MDT projects; and
- Lists of firms in relevant subindustries identified in Dun & Bradstreet's Hoover's database, whether or not they have worked with MDT in the past.

In addition, Keen Independent and MDT will prepare an email blast and other communications that will reach a large number of trade groups and individuals interested in MDT work. Anyone learning about the availability analysis can submit information about his or her firm through an online survey.

Do I have to complete the interview over the phone?

No, business owners and managers can complete the survey online at [MDT Online Availability Survey](#) (available soon).

Why was my firm called to participate in an in-depth personal interview?

The study team is conducting one- to two-hour in-depth interviews with business owners and managers to discuss their experiences in the Montana marketplace. A Keen Independent study team member will meet with businesses to conduct these in-person interviews.

The in-depth interviews will review ways to encourage small businesses participation in MDT contracts. The interviews will also discuss the effectiveness of current programs for minority- and women-owned businesses.

Many of the firms participating in these in-depth interviews will be identified as part of the availability surveys. During each availability interview, Customer Research International will ask business owners and managers if they are interested in participating in an in-person follow up interview. (The online surveys will ask this question as well.) Keen Independent will then randomly select businesses for follow-up in-depth interviews, and a study team member will schedule a convenient interview time.