



SBPO Quarterly Newsletter

A Small Business Programs Office Publication

A Message from SBPO'S Director, Meshelle MV Howard

Greetings Small Business Community,

This is our last newsletter for the year, and I want to thank you for an awesome year of interacting with you and learning more about what we can do to assist you in your business successes with Metro.

We certified 69 Minority Business Enterprises (MBE), 37 Small Businesses (SBP), and 29 Micro-Businesses (MBP) this year, which means we can offer our internal and external customers more small businesses to choose from in the needed NAICS Codes for products and services.

We hosted 13 virtual outreaches and attended 33 external outreaches to educate small minority- and women-owned businesses this year. I am so proud to see all we were able to accomplish with such a small staff.

A special thank you to our partners who support small businesses and helped us to have an amazing year in staying connected, educating, and presenting contracting opportunities.

Our Partners for 2023:

Small Business Association

DC Small Business Development Center at Howard University

Maryland Insurance Administration

Kiewit

Motorola

inmixGroup

NuAxis Innovations

Foundation Surety and Insurance Solutions, LLC

Century Engineering

Concrete General

Fort Myer Construction

Wagman

Stay in the loop with Metro by ensuring your contact information is updated/current and by checking the website for upcoming procurements. The Small Business Programs Office (SBPO) sends out information on outreaches, contracting opportunities, and the SBPO Newsletter consistently.

We welcome all small businesses to visit our site and look at the information for the certification criteria. The Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), Small Business (SBP) and Micro-Business (MBP) programs were created to provide additional contracting opportunities for small, women, and minority-owned businesses. The contracts and purchases that will be subject to these programs are non-federal funded and not subject to federal requirements.

We know that everyone's schedule is busy, and you may be unable to make all outreach and training events. You can find them on the SBPO website or by clicking [here](#).

Visit [Socio-Economic Programs | Metro](#) to learn more about how to become certified with Metro in one or more of the following socioeconomic programs:

- Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE)
- Small Business Enterprise (SBE)
- Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) – New
- Small Business Program (SBP) – New
- Micro-Business Program (MBP) – New

To better position your business for success, always remember "Certification is the Key to Participation." We look forward to your certification applications being submitted to Metro's Small Business Programs Office.

Cordially,

Meshelle M.V. Howard, MCA

Small Business Resolutions for the New Year

As we approach the end of another year, it's the perfect time for small businesses to reflect on their journey and set their sights on new horizons. New Year's resolutions aren't just for personal growth; they can also be powerful tools for the growth and success of your business. In this article, we offer some resolutions and strategies to consider as you enter the upcoming year.

1. Expand Your Network

Make it a resolution to expand your network in the coming year. Networking is an invaluable asset for small businesses. Join industry associations, attend conferences, and engage in local business groups. The relationships you build can lead to new opportunities, partnerships, and insights.

Here are organization suggestions for small businesses:

[Small Business Association \(SBA\)](#)

[Department of Small and Local Business Development \(DSLBD\)](#)

[Minority Business Development Agency \(MBDA\)](#)

2. Embrace Technology

Technology is evolving at a rapid pace, and staying updated is crucial. Resolve to embrace technology that can streamline your operations, improve customer service, and boost your online presence. Whether it's adopting new software, enhancing your website, or utilizing social media effectively, technology can be a game-changer.

3. Diversify Your Offerings

Explore ways to diversify your products or services. Consider adding complementary offerings that can expand your customer base and revenue streams. Diversification can make your business more resilient and less dependent on a single market or client.

4. Invest in Professional Development

Investing in your own skills and knowledge is a valuable resolution. Attend workshops, webinars, and training programs to stay updated with industry trends and best practices. Personal and professional growth often go hand in hand.

Browse our Outreach Calendar for upcoming webinars and events on professional development.

5. Strengthen Financial Planning

Take financial planning seriously. Review your business finances regularly, set a budget, and plan for contingencies. Whether it's saving for a rainy day or securing investment for growth, sound financial planning is the foundation of a successful business.

6. Prioritize Sustainability

Sustainability is not just a trend; it's becoming a core business principle. Resolve to adopt more eco-friendly practices, reduce waste, and minimize your environmental impact. Not only is this good for the planet, but it's also increasingly valued by customers.

7. Engage with the Community

Demonstrate your commitment to the community by engaging in local initiatives and giving back. Being a socially responsible business can improve your reputation and create a positive impact.

8. Review and Update Your Business Plan

Take the time to review and update your business plan. Goals and circumstances change, and a well-crafted business plan keeps your vision clear and helps you adapt to new opportunities and challenges.

9. Seek New Opportunities

Stay vigilant for new opportunities. Metro is ever evolving, and new projects and contracts emerge regularly. Resolve to actively seek out these opportunities and be proactive in bidding for them.

To see what opportunities Metro has to offer, view our solicitation page here.

10. Focus on Self-Care

Lastly, don't forget about self-care. As a small business owner, it's easy to get caught up in the daily grind. Remember to take care of yourself, both physically and mentally. A well-rested, healthy, and focused entrepreneur is better equipped to handle the demands of business.

As you embark on the new year, consider these resolutions and strategies to drive your small business forward. Metro's Small Business Programs Office is here to support you every step of the way. We look forward to a successful and prosperous year ahead and to helping you achieve your goals in the transportation industry.

Words of Wisdom

"New Year - a new chapter, new verse, or just the same old story? Ultimately, we write it. The choice is ours."

Alex Morritt

This message encapsulates the idea that the arrival of a new year offers us a unique opportunity for personal and collective renewal. It reminds us that we have the power to shape the narrative of our lives and businesses. We can choose to embrace change, set new goals, and make meaningful decisions that lead to a fresh and fulfilling chapter, or we can stick to the status quo. Morritt's message underscores the importance of taking ownership of our choices and actively participating in crafting our own stories in the year ahead.

Three Common Myths about Certification: Debunking the Misconceptions

In the dynamic world of business, the power of certification can never be underestimated. For many small business owners, securing a certification can seem like the golden ticket to success, a promise of preferential treatment, and a guarantee of steady growth. However, these perceptions often come with a set of myths that need to be debunked. In this article, we'll unravel three common misconceptions about Metro's Small Business Programs Office Socioeconomic Programs and shed light on the reality behind them.

Myth 1: Certification Guarantees Instant Business Success and Preferential Treatment

Reality: Certification promotes equal opportunity but does not guarantee automatic success or preferential treatment.

Securing a certification is undoubtedly a significant achievement for any business. It's a testament to your eligibility and opens doors to a world of opportunities within Metro. However, it's crucial to understand that certification is not a magic wand that instantly propels your business to success.

Certification provides a level playing field, ensuring that all businesses, regardless of size or background, have an equal chance to compete for contracts. While it offers you a seat at the table, success still depends on factors such as your business acumen, competitive offerings, and the quality of your services or products. Preferential treatment is about fairness, not guaranteed success.

Myth 2: Only Minority-Owned Businesses Can Obtain a Metro Certification

Reality: Metro's Socioeconomic Programs are open to socially and economically disadvantaged individuals or businesses, regardless of specific racial or ethnic background.

A common misconception is that only businesses owned by individuals from specific racial or ethnic backgrounds can obtain a certification with Metro. In reality, Metro's socioeconomic programs

are designed to support socially and economically disadvantaged individuals or businesses, without discriminating based on specific racial or ethnic criteria.

To be eligible for certification, a business must meet the criteria of disadvantage, which can be based on factors such as personal net worth, individual circumstances, and societal and economic disadvantages. Metro's goal is to promote diversity and inclusion within its supplier base, acknowledging that disadvantage can take various forms.

Myth 3: Once Certified, There Is No Need to Maintain or Renew Your Certification

Reality: In order to maintain active status, Metro certification necessitates triennial audits to assess compliance with program guidelines.

Certification is not a one-time event but an ongoing commitment. Once you achieve Metro certification, it's essential to understand that it requires periodic renewal to remain active. Certifications are typically valid for a specific duration, and renewal processes are in place to ensure that businesses continue to meet the eligibility criteria.

Additionally, maintaining certification status means adhering to program guidelines and staying informed about changes in regulations or industry trends. Renewal and compliance are crucial to sustain the benefits of certification.

Understanding these myths and the reality behind Metro certifications can help small business owners make informed decisions and effectively leverage the opportunities they provide. Certification is a valuable tool for growth and advancement, but it should be seen as a step in a journey, not the destination itself. With the right information and a clear perspective, small businesses can harness the potential of certification to thrive in the competitive landscape of Metro's opportunities.

Introducing MetroForward's Metro Express

Metro has launched a new newsletter to give our customers the latest and greatest on new initiatives, behind-the-scenes info, and other fun facts. Metro Express will keep our customers informed on all things Metro. [Subscribe today!](#)

Metro's Qualified Parts List System and Supplier Qualification Process

Metro employs a Qualified Parts List (QPL) system, which entails a comprehensive catalog of approved products and verified manufacturers complying with specific specifications. Our dedicated engineering groups oversee the qualification of new suppliers and their components. Suppliers aspiring to qualify for specific parts should actively monitor procurement bids posted by our department or directly reach out to our engineering groups to express their interest. These groups diligently assess requests, potentially initiate first article inspections, conduct thorough testing (a process that may span up to two years), and meticulously review specifications. Following the evaluation, the engineering groups decide, either granting approval or rejection, and update our internal ERP system accordingly. Approved suppliers are then integrated into our bidding pool for future procurements. It's crucial to note that acceptance into the QPL does not guarantee orders; Metro adheres to a competitive bidding process. Furthermore, we emphasize that we do not accept catalogs or line sheets for potential review. Instead, requests are considered on a part-by-part basis, allowing for rigorous evaluation of components concerning configuration management and quality. While we are open to cost-saving suggestions, the qualification process remains consistent.

Upcoming Opportunities in the New Year: Metro's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

As we look ahead to the new year, it's an exciting time for small businesses in the transportation sector, and Metro's Fiscal Year 2024 budget holds the promise of significant opportunities. This budget not only shapes the future of public transportation in the Washington metropolitan area but also provides a roadmap for small businesses to engage with Metro and thrive in the industry.

Why Metro's FY 2024 Budget Matters for Small Businesses

Metro's budget is more than just financial figures and projections. It's a blueprint for the projects, contracts, and partnerships that will define the year ahead. Small businesses play a crucial role in the transportation ecosystem, and this budget offers a glimpse into the numerous opportunities that will become available.

Key Areas of Focus in FY 2024

The Fiscal Year 2024 budget outlines several key areas of focus that are of particular interest to small businesses:

1. **Infrastructure Investment:** Metro's commitment to infrastructure improvement creates opportunities for small businesses in construction, engineering, and related fields.
2. **Technology and Innovation:** The budget includes provisions for technological advancements, offering potential contracts for small businesses specializing in software development, data analytics, and digital solutions.
3. **Sustainability Initiatives:** As sustainability continues to be a priority, small businesses involved in eco-friendly products, energy-efficient solutions, and green practices can look forward to contracts in this space.
4. **Supplier Diversity:** Metro remains dedicated to supporting supplier diversity. The budget emphasizes opportunities for small and disadvantaged businesses.

How Small Businesses Can Prepare

1. **Stay Informed:** Review Metro's budget documents and publications to stay informed about upcoming projects, contracts, and areas of focus.
2. **Certification and Qualification:** Ensure that your business is properly certified and qualified to participate in Metro's procurement opportunities.
3. **Network and Collaborate:** Engage with Metro's Small Business Programs Office, industry associations, and local business groups to network and build valuable partnerships.
4. **Attend SBPO Events:** Keep an eye out for events, workshops, and webinars that provide insights into the procurement process and industry trends.
5. **Innovate and Diversify:** Consider how your business can innovate and diversify its offerings to align with Metro's priorities.

The new year brings with it a world of potential. By closely examining Metro's Fiscal Year 2024 budget and actively participating in the procurement process, small businesses can position themselves for success. Metro's Small Business Programs Office is here to assist and guide you on this journey, providing resources, support, and a wealth of opportunities to help your business thrive in the transportation industry.

As we move into the new year, seize the opportunities presented by Metro's budget, and let your small business contribute to the future of transportation in the Washington metropolitan area. The road ahead is filled with potential, and we look forward to supporting your success in 2024 and beyond.

You can review Metro's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget [here](#).

Explore SBPO's Resource Corner

Frequently Asked Questions

Do you have questions about SBPO's services, eligibility, or certification requirements? Visit our [FAQs section](#) to find answers to common queries. We're here to make the process as transparent and accessible as possible.

Share Your Input

We value your feedback and want to tailor our services to your needs. Take a moment to participate in our survey and help us improve our outreach efforts.

Do you have suggestions for education topics you'd like to see in SBPO's future outreach? How can we enhance our support during the certification process? Is there a specific aspect of certification that you'd like explained in greater detail? We're here to provide the information you need. [Complete the survey here](#).

Contact Us

If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to reach out. You can email us at sbpohotline@wmata.com. Our dedicated team is ready to assist you with any inquiries you may have.

Visit Our Website

For a comprehensive overview of what the Small Business Programs Office has to offer, visit our [website](#). Explore the full range of resources, support, and opportunities available to small businesses looking to partner with us.

At SBPO, your input and success are our priorities. We're here to support you every step of the way, so please take advantage of our resources and stay connected with us. Together, we can achieve your business goals and contribute to our shared success. Visit our website here for more information about our offerings.

Gratitude and Community Impact

As the year comes to a close, it's an ideal time to reflect on the importance of gratitude and the impact we've had on our local community. At Metro's Small Business Programs Office, we hold these values close to our hearts and are proud to share some of the ways in which our work has made a positive difference.



Marlo Johnson representing SBPO at the Minority Outreach Fair hosted by MBDA.

Supporting Small Businesses and Local Economies

Our commitment to supporting small businesses extends beyond contracts and partnerships. It's about fostering economic growth within our community and creating opportunities for entrepreneurs and professionals. By providing guidance, resources, and access to procurement opportunities, we empower small businesses to thrive.

In doing so, we contribute to job creation, economic development, and the overall well-being of the Washington metropolitan area. Small businesses are not just the lifeblood of our economy; they are essential pillars of our community.

Engaging with the Community

We understand that community engagement is a two-way street. Our team actively participates in local events, outreach programs, and networking opportunities to connect with the community we serve. It's not just about business; it's about building relationships, understanding local needs, and addressing concerns.

Our community engagement efforts go beyond business transactions. They're about listening, learning, and collaborating to make transportation more accessible, sustainable, and inclusive.

Giving Back and Social Responsibility

We believe in giving back to the community that has supported us. Through various initiatives and partnerships, we contribute to social responsibility efforts that benefit the broader community. Promoting education and our commitment to making a positive impact is unwavering.

By nurturing these values and taking an active role in the community, we create a more inclusive and vibrant environment for all. This work is a testament to the power of collaboration and the far-reaching influence of small businesses in the transportation sector.



Marlo Johnson and Heather Crook with Wayne Frazier at the Minority Outreach Fair.

A Word of Thanks

As we conclude another year of service, we want to express our deepest gratitude to the small businesses we've had the privilege of working with, the local community for its unwavering support, and our dedicated team members who make it all possible. Your collective efforts have enriched our community and strengthened our commitment to a prosperous and sustainable transportation future.

Together, we look forward to a new year filled with even more opportunities to make a difference and further our impact. Our promise remains: Metro's Small Business Programs Office is here to support small businesses, engage with the community, and drive positive change in the transportation industry. Thank you for being a part of our journey, and we can't wait to see what the future holds.

As we celebrate the holiday season and enter the new year, let's continue to work together, support one another, and keep making a meaningful difference in the Washington metropolitan area. Your success is our success, and your well-being is our priority. Here's to a bright and impactful future for all!



Procurement & SBPO Staff with Metro General Manager Randy Clarke.

New Certifications and Renewals

Highlighting recently certified and renewed businesses partnering with Metro. Explore this section to meet our latest additions dedicated to delivering exceptional products and services while supporting our local business community!

Home State

Talentology LLC
Dr. Arielle Miller Coaching & Consulting

Interstate

American Vet Industries, LLC
N3O Technologies, LLC
Lion Solutions, LLC
Vinsys Information Technology, Inc
Willoughby Robinson Associates LLC
Lake Anna Contracting, LLC
DL Metal Design LLC
FinEx Consultancy LLC
Sandra Palone & Associates, LLC
LUSTER NATIONAL INC.
Blue Ange Architecture, PLLC
United Engineering Services, Inc.
Jaymor Enterprises, Inc
Build Flex Services LLC
1821 Freight LLC
CostTech Group
CodeRed Business Solutions Inc.

Beckwith Railway Services LLC
Ayoroa Simmons LLC
Domingo Gonzalez Associates, Inc.
Leading Edge Construction Services LLC
Inflexion Management Sciences, LLC
Veteran Technology Leaders, LLC
IBS Management & Consultancy Service LLC
CWI Solutions
Bedford, Louis & Ellicott, LLC
TRACONCEPTS LLC
NEXIEN INC.
Accountaxstic LLC
CPM Schedule Solutions LLC
Olan Williams and Associates LLC
MEHMOOD GENERAL CONTRACTING CORP

Three Year Review

iDesign Engineering, Inc.
SysUSA, Inc.
Oboe Galaxy Management, LLC
Contine Corporation
Bay Associates Environmental
iCUBE Systems, Inc.

RJM Engineering, Inc
Compass Solutions LLC
Consolidated Construction & Engineering
Hyper Local Solutions LLC
L & L Construction Associates Inc
Endesco Inc
Emotive Architecture, PLLC
Dynamic Pro, Inc.
JNG Supply, LLC
Wycliffe Technologies, Inc.
JCM & Associates, Inc.
JMD Building Products LLC
Empire Landscape, LLC.
1ST RESOURCE SOLUTIONS, LLC
Bree & Associates, Inc.
Marine Tiger Technologies, Inc.
Facility Matters LLC
Transport Group LLC
Paco Group Inc
Angarai International, Inc.
Revella Consulting Group, LLC
Mahan Rykiel Associates, Inc.

Mark Your Calendar: Upcoming Outreach Opportunities

We invite you to be part of these upcoming outreach events. These gatherings are not just about information; they're about inspiration, collaboration, and empowerment. Come meet like-minded individuals, gain knowledge, and find the support you need to take your business to the next level. Your presence can make a difference!

November 14, 2033	Strategic Planning for Businesses REGISTER HERE
November 15, 2023	Small Business Summit REGISTER HERE
November 15, 2023	Black Female Founders Venture Capital Forum REGISTER HERE
November 16, 2023	Technical Assistance Program by Hensel Phelps & Supplier Diversity Group REGISTER HERE
November 16, 2023	Maryland's VSBE Subcontracting Protocols REGISTER HERE
November 16, 2023	MGM National Harbor Business Expo and Procurement Networking Opportunity REGISTER HERE
November 16-17, 2023	Smart Technology MBE Seminar REGISTER HERE
November 25, 2023	Black Owned Small Business Expo REGISTER HERE
November 25, 2023	Small Business Saturday REGISTER HERE
November 28, 2023	An Introduction to Federal Government Small Business Certifications REGISTER HERE
November 30, 2023	Business Contracts 101 REGISTER HERE
December 2, 2023	Creative Small Business Expo REGISTER HERE
December 14, 2023	Minority Outreach Fair REGISTER HERE

Check out the full listing of Maryland small business events online at goMDsmallbiz.maryland.gov & SBPO's event [here](#).

Important Updates for Small Businesses

Disparity Study

The State of Maryland has retained MGT Consulting Group to conduct a disparity study. The overall purpose of the study is to determine whether there is racial and/or gender discrimination in the markets in which the State does business. This includes both the public and private sectors. All vendors, regardless of minority status or certification status, are encouraged to participate in MGT's online vendor questionnaire. This may be a difficult topic to recall and discuss, however, your feedback is important. Your responses will be aggregated with all other businesses who respond and used for the purpose of the disparity study. Individual information is kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. You'll find the vendor questionnaire [here](https://stateofmdisparitystudy.com).



New Supply Chain & Workforce Development Funding for Offshore Wind Industry Development

Governor Wes Moore recently announced that more than \$6 million in funding will be offered by the Maryland Energy Administration through its Maryland Offshore Wind Grant Program Portfolio. The program is designed to help Maryland's emerging businesses and workforce get involved in the growing offshore wind industry. The portfolio is divided into two main programs: the Maryland Offshore Wind Supply Chain Investment Program, and the Maryland Offshore Wind Workforce and Education Program. Each program contains multiple areas of interest for individuals to maximize the opportunities available this Fiscal Year. The application deadline for both programs and all areas of interest is February 1, 2024.

[Maryland Offshore Wind Supply Chain Investment Program](#)

[Maryland Offshore Wind Workforce and Education Program](#)



Increasing the Share of Contract Dollars Awarded to Small Disadvantaged Businesses for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 and in Subsequent Fiscal Years

The Federal Government is increasing its contracting opportunities to at least 15% for Small Business Development (SDBs) starting in FY 2025. The 8(a) Business Development Program is crucial for expanding access to the federal marketplace for businesses with past discrimination. Agencies should also increase contracting opportunities for WOSBs, HUBZone small businesses, and SDVOSBs. The OMB will collaborate with various councils to build the Federal supplier base's diversity and resilience. Efforts include increasing opportunities for small businesses, strengthening procurement forecasts, expanding access to Federal contracting, and improving subcontracting practices. View the memo [here](#).

The Department of Energy Domestic Manufacturing Conversion Grants program

The Department of Energy (DOE) Domestic Manufacturing Conversion Grants program is a new, one-time funding opportunity under the Inflation Reduction Act that will provide grants and loan guarantees to support domestic production of efficient hybrid, plug-in hybrid, plug-in electric drive, and hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles.

This includes production of hybrid or electric transit buses. Production includes vehicle assembly, component assembly, and manufacturing of related parts.

Funding priority will be given to grant proposals involving conversion, expansion, or retooling of existing facilities (or facilities that have recently ceased operation) to support the above. Priority will also be given to greenfield construction in the same general area of an existing or recently closed facility, as well as projects demonstrating substantial workforce benefits.

The funding opportunity is open until Wednesday, November 1 for initial concept papers (9-page maximum).

DOE will encourage a subset of applicants who submit concept papers to submit full applications. These applications will be due on January 9, 2024. Only applicants who have submitted concept papers will be eligible to submit full applications.

Please contact the Department of Energy at DE-FOA-0003106@netl.doe.gov with any questions about this program.

For more information about the Domestic Manufacturing Conversion Grants Program, [click here](#).