



Q1 Newsletter

April 2026

Metro's Small Business
Programs Office



Director's Corner



Meshelle M.V. Howard
Small Business Program
Office Director

Greetings Business Community,

As we move into the Spring and Summer seasons, WMATA remains dedicated to supporting the growth and success of small businesses across our region. Metro continues to advance major initiatives, from system improvements to long-term capital projects, creating ongoing opportunities for firms of all sizes to participate in our contracting efforts. Your involvement plays an important role in strengthening our local economy and the communities we serve.

We know that the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Interim Final Rule (DBE IFR) has created some road blocks for some of you, but know that Metro's Small Business Program Office (SPBO) is here to assist and support you in the new processes for reevaluations. Our team is working diligently to prepare to receive your documents. In this issue of our newsletter, you will see guidance on uploading the necessary document for reevaluation.

Throughout 2026, our office is offering a full schedule of educational webinars and targeted small business outreaches. We encourage you to visit our website regularly to explore upcoming sessions and stay informed about new opportunities. Whether you are entering the marketplace for the first time or seeking to broaden your impact, WMATA creates space for businesses of all kinds to engage and advance. Know that we are hard at work planning our 2027 schedule of webinars and in-person outreaches to support your business. You will see some new events added to the schedule and we encourage your feedback on each event and webinar. The surveys we send out helps us to plan how to support your businesses with educational tools and opportunities.

For firms already certified with us, please ensure your contact information is current, so you receive timely notifications about upcoming opportunities. We value your partnership and look forward to continuing our work together. As always, we are "Your Metro, The Way Forward."

If your schedule prevents you from attending training events, you can still access video recordings anytime on Metro's YouTube Channel. Visit Metro's Small Business Programs Office webpage to learn more about the certification pathways available to small businesses. We look forward to partnering with you and supporting your continued growth through the WMATA Small Business Programs Office.

Cordially,
Meshelle M.V. Howard, MCA

Meet the Primes — Construction Edition

Our Largest and Most Impactful Event Yet

Metro's Small Business Programs Office is proud to share that our recent **Meet the Primes – Construction Edition** was a tremendous success, marking our **largest turnout to date** and setting a new standard for future outreach events. A strong start to the first quarter!

This highly anticipated event brought together an unprecedented number of small businesses, prime contractors, and industry partners, creating a dynamic environment focused on connection, collaboration, and opportunity. With **more exhibitors and prime participation than ever before**, attendees had expanded access to key decision-makers and a broader range of contracting opportunities across the construction sector.

We were honored to have industry leaders such as **Clark Construction Group** and **Hensel Phelps**, in partnership with DDOT, as featured participants. **W.M. Schlosser Company** delivered a presentation, providing valuable insights and guidance to attendees. Additional prime contractors, including **FH Paschen and Gilbane**, contributed to the strong industry presence.

The event also featured a diverse group of exhibitors, including **Anne Arundel County, WSSC Water, Goldman Sachs, and WHC Lending**, offering attendees access to resources, information, and potential financing opportunities to support business growth.

Throughout the event, small businesses engaged directly with primes and agencies, gained insight into upcoming opportunities, and participated in meaningful conversations that could lead to future partnerships. The energy in the room reflected a shared commitment to strengthening Metro's small business community and expanding access to opportunity.

The continued growth of **Meet the Primes** is a testament to the increasing demand for intentional, high-impact outreach — and to the dedication of the businesses and partners who show up ready to connect and engage. With each event, we remain focused on refining the experience, expanding participation, and delivering even greater value to our small business community.

Looking Ahead

As this signature outreach continues to grow, we are excited to build on this momentum and make each event better than the last. We look forward to welcoming even more participants at our upcoming **Metro's Meet the Primes — Engineering Edition** on Thursday, June 18, 2026 ([register here](#)) and continuing to create spaces where meaningful connections turn into real opportunities.

From Interest to Action:

Turning Outreach into Real Opportunities

Attending outreach events is an important first step — but turning those connections into real business opportunities requires intentional follow-up and preparation. As Metro continues to create spaces for small businesses to connect with agency representatives and prime contractors, it's essential to approach each interaction with a strategy in mind.

With two of our most anticipated in-person events approaching — Metro's Small Business Opportunities Fair and Meet the Primes: Engineering Edition — now is the time to prepare not just to attend, but to act.

Come Prepared with Purpose

Before attending any outreach event, take time to research participating agencies and prime contractors. Identify who aligns with your services and prioritize those connections. Bring a polished capability statement and be ready to clearly communicate what your business offers and what makes you unique. Don't forget to have business cards available — whether printed or digital — to easily share your contact information and leave a lasting impression.

Make Meaningful Connections

During the event, focus on quality over quantity. Introduce yourself with confidence, ask thoughtful questions, and listen carefully to what agencies and primes are looking for. Strong connections are built through genuine, professional engagement — not just quick exchanges.

Follow Up Strategically

The most critical step happens after the event. Follow up within a few days with a concise email:

- Reference your conversation
- Reintroduce your business
- Include your capability statement
- Express interest in staying connected

Consistent and professional follow-up helps keep your business top of mind.

Stay Engaged and Visible

Outreach is not a one-time interaction — it's an ongoing process. Continue attending events, engaging with Metro's programs, and building relationships over time. The businesses that see results are those that remain visible and persistent.

Be Ready for Opportunity

As connections turn into opportunities, ensure your business is prepared to respond. This includes having the right documentation, capacity, and internal processes in place to move quickly and effectively.

Outreach events open the door, but what you do next determines the outcome. By preparing in advance, engaging intentionally, and following up strategically, you can turn initial conversations into meaningful business opportunities.

Register for Upcoming Events

Don't miss your opportunity to connect, learn, and grow your business with Metro:

- [Metro's Small Business Opportunities Fair](#)
- [Meet the Primes — Engineering Edition](#)

Secure your spot today and come ready to turn interest into action.

Beyond Certification:

How to Stay Competitive After You're Certified

Becoming a certified small business is a significant milestone — but certification is just the beginning. To fully benefit from available opportunities, firms must take proactive steps to remain competitive and visible in the marketplace.

1. Strengthen Your Capability Statement

Your capability statement is often the first impression you make on agencies and prime contractors. Ensure it is:

- Clear, concise, and tailored to your target audience
- Updated with relevant past performance
- Highlighting your certifications, core competencies, and differentiators

A strong capability statement should quickly communicate why your firm is the right partner.

2. Build Relationships with Prime Contractors

Success in government contracting is relationship-driven. Attend outreach events, industry days, and networking sessions to connect with prime contractors. Follow up after meetings and stay engaged — consistent communication helps keep your firm top of mind when opportunities arise.

3. Actively Monitor Contract Opportunities

Stay informed about upcoming solicitations by regularly checking procurement portals and subscribing to agency updates. Understanding what's coming down the pipeline allows you to prepare early and position your business strategically.

Procurement Resources in the DMV**- Metro Procurement Opportunities**

[Explore](#) contracting opportunities with Metro, including goods, services, and infrastructure projects.

- State of Maryland Projects (eMMA)

[Access](#) Maryland's procurement portal to find and bid on state projects and services.

- Maryland Environmental Service (MES)

[Discover](#) contracting opportunities and partner with MES on environmental and infrastructure projects.

- Maryland Judiciary Procurement

[View](#) procurement opportunities to support Maryland's court system.

- District Department of Transportation (DDOT)

[Find](#) transportation and infrastructure-related contracting opportunities in Washington, DC.

- Prince George's County Contract Administration & Procurement

[Connect](#) with Prince George's County for opportunities to provide goods and services.

- Montgomery County Office of Procurement

[Explore](#) procurement opportunities and resources for doing business with Montgomery County.

- DC Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP)

[Access](#) the District's centralized procurement portal for contracting opportunities.

- Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) Water Bid Opportunities

[Stay informed](#) on bid solicitations and contracting opportunities with WSSC Water.

4. Invest in Your Business Infrastructure

Ensure your business is ready to perform by maintaining:

- Adequate staffing and resources
- Strong financial management practices
- Compliance with all regulatory and reporting requirements

Agencies and primes are looking for firms that are not only qualified, but also reliable and scalable.

5. Continue Learning and Growing

Take advantage of workshops, webinars, and training opportunities offered by Metro and partner organizations. Topics such as proposal writing, financial management, and marketing can strengthen your competitiveness and help you pursue larger opportunities.

6. Market Your Business Consistently

Don't rely on certification alone — actively promote your services. Utilize your website, LinkedIn, and other platforms to showcase your work, highlight achievements, and share updates. Visibility plays a key role in attracting new partnerships.

Certification opens the door, but sustained success comes from preparation, persistence, and strategic engagement. By continuing to build relationships, enhance your capabilities, and stay informed, your firm can move beyond certification and position itself for long-term growth.

Interstate Firms: IFR Letter Submission Now Open in Supplier Portal

WMATA's Small Business Programs Office is pleased to announce that, effective April 1, 2026, interstate firms that have completed their reevaluation with their Jurisdiction of Certification (JOC) may now upload their Interim Final Rule (IFR) letter through the Supplier Portal.

To be accepted, IFR letters must:

1. Be issued by your Unified Certification Program (UCP), and
2. Confirm that your firm has been reevaluated and recertified in accordance with Interim Final Rule requirements

Resources are available to assist firms with this process, including a step-by-step Job Aid, the USDOT Interim Final Rule, and FAQs.

Links to DBE IFR Instructions:

- [USDOT DBE Interim Final Rule](#)
- [USDOT Interim Final Rule FAQs](#)

WMATA appreciates your continued partnership and cooperation as these federal updates are implemented. For questions or assistance, please contact the SBPO Hotline at SBPOHotline@wmata.com.

Words Of Wisdom

“Without commitment, you’ll never start. But more importantly, without consistency, you’ll never finish.”

— Denzel Washington

Success in business isn’t driven by a single moment — it’s built through sustained effort over time. Commitment is what gets you started, whether it’s registering your business, attending your first outreach event, or pursuing new opportunities. But it’s consistency — showing up, following up, and continuing to improve — that drives real results.

For small businesses, growth often comes from the daily work that happens behind the scenes: refining your capabilities, building relationships, and staying engaged even when progress feels slow. Each step forward, no matter how small, contributes to long-term success. Staying committed to the process — and consistent in your efforts — positions your business to be ready when opportunity arises.

Explore SBPO’s Resources:

Survey: 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. Tell us:

- 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.

Upcoming Outreach

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!

Thursday, May 7, 2026
Metro's Small Business Opportunities Fair
(in person, New Carrollton Building)

In celebration of National Small Business Week, this event connects small businesses with government agencies to explore contracting opportunities. Attendees will hear brief presentations, meet agency representatives, and visit exhibitor tables to learn about upcoming projects, requirements, and available resources. This is a valuable opportunity to network, gain insights, and position your business for future contracts.

[Registration Link](#)

Thursday, May 14, 2026
Roger Nicolas / How Science Can Enhance Leadership & Business Growth

This session explores how behavioral science and customer experience insights can help leaders strengthen visibility, build trust, and drive sustainable business growth. Participants will learn strategies to overcome leadership blind spots and improve customer relationships.

[Registration Link](#)

Thursday, May 21, 2026
Madia Brown / How to Harness Your Personal Brand Power to Boost Your Business

Join Madia Brown, Chief Storytelling Strategist for Brandire, an award-winning brand marketing communications firm, for an interactive session on the power of personal branding. This session is for anyone looking to stand out in the business world. Discover how your unique qualities and values can supercharge your business, drawing in more opportunities and making a lasting impression.

[Registration Link](#)

Thursday, June 18, 2026
Metro's Meet the Primes — Engineering Edition
(in person, New Carrollton Building)

Enjoy in-person networking with engineering industry leaders and explore potential partnership opportunities. Learn about upcoming projects, procurement processes, and how your business can collaborate with WMATA's prime contractors. Don't miss this chance to connect and grow your business. Space is limited so reserve your spot now!

[Registration Link](#)

Check out the full listing of SBPO's events [here](#).

Transportation News & Small Business Updates

Metro Secures Regional Support for Long-Term Funding

Virginia and Maryland leaders have endorsed new funding recommendations to strengthen Metro's long-term sustainability and capital investments.

[Learn more](#)

Major Red Line Construction Planned for Summer 2026

Metro will begin significant Red Line improvements this summer, including station upgrades and Purple Line integration, creating future opportunities tied to infrastructure and transit development.

[Learn more](#)

Maryland Expands Transit-Oriented Development Initiatives

MDOT continues advancing transit-oriented development projects, creating new economic and business opportunities near transit hubs across the region.

[Learn more](#)

Additional Metro Funding Advancing Through Regional Action

Local and state leaders are moving forward with additional funding measures to support Metro's capital program and long-term system improvements.

[Learn more](#)

Virginia Transportation Investments Continue Statewide

Virginia continues to invest in transit and infrastructure through its statewide improvement program, supporting long-term mobility and economic growth.

[Learn more](#)

DC Chamber Highlights Key Impacts of Mayor Bowser's FY2026 Budget

The DC Chamber of Commerce released a breakdown of Mayor Bowser's FY2026 "Grow DC" budget, emphasizing its focus on economic growth, business attraction, and streamlining processes to make it easier to do business in the District. Key initiatives include reducing regulatory barriers, supporting local businesses, and investing in long-term economic development amid a shifting regional economy.

[Learn more](#)