

Tracey Edwards Provides Insight on How to do Business with Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC)

- 1. Tell us about your position and role with Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC)?**

I am the Supplier Diversity Program Manager for the Outreach and Development Team of the Office of Supplier Diversity and Inclusion, (OSDI). It is up to us to educate and create awareness about both the MBE and SLBE Programs' benefits and features. We host vendor days, contract specific outreach events and provide information regarding Doing business with WSSC. We also facilitate workshops through our Technical Assistance Program (TAP In).

- 2. Tell us about WSSC's Minority and Women Business programs, and the difference between local and other programs you may offer?**

WSSC's Office of Supplier Diversity and Inclusion administers two Programs, the Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) and Small Local Business Enterprise (SLBE) Program.

WSSC does not certify firms for its MBE Program; instead we recognize the certification of the following MBE certification agencies:

- Maryland Department of Transportation (M-DOT);
- Prince George's County Supplier Diversity Development Division (SDDD);
- Capital Region Minority Supplier Development Council (Region of NMSDC);
- Women's President Educational Organization (Region of WBENC and
- D.C. Dept. of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD)-only firms certified as DBEs qualify for the Commission Program.

If a firm is certified by one and/or more of the above agencies we encourage them to get involved with our Programs. It is important to note the WSSC'S MBE definition includes Women-Owned Businesses and Disadvantage-Owned Businesses.

The Small Local Business Enterprise (SLBE) Program is designed to encourage the utilization of small local firms located in Prince George's County and Montgomery Counties. The WSSC approves all SLBE firms for this program through an application process.

- 3. What certification(s) will WSSC accept and do vendors have to get pre-approved to do work on your system?**

See above for certifications. Some specific solicitations in the form of a RFQ or occasionally a RFP may request an approval process. Generally, there is no pre-approved process.

- 4. Does WSSC set goals on individual projects or across the board? How does the process work?**

Subcontracting or Tier 2 requirements related to this program are established on a contract specific basis and can be applied to all four of our contracting areas. The OSDI generally has the opportunity to see all solicitations over \$100,000.00 that will be advertised in the

Supplier Portal. Our office will determine the subcontracting requirement with the assistance of the End User providing areas of available subcontracting.

5. How does a company get registered with WSSC to earn a chance at new work?

WSSC has its own Supplier Portal which is a web-based supplier registration and can be found on our website at wsscwater.com/contracts. Solicitations \$100,000.00 and over are advertised using a competitively sealed bidding process. A significant benefit of our system is that registered vendors will be notified via e-mail when contracting opportunities matching their profile become available. Also, in order to download bid opportunities, you must be registered in the portal. Our saying is that we buy everything from **paper clips to pipe** and services that range from **maintenance to consulting**.

6. Does WSSC require a contractor to be bonded? If so, what types and level?

This information is provided on our website and will also be provided for each specific solicitation in the Appendix B attachment.

7. Does WSSC track payments from primes to sub-contractors? If so, how does that work?

Our WSSC web-based compliance system, is a tool we use to ensure that our Prime contractors are not only meeting their subcontracting requirements, but also ensuring that Subcontractors are being paid in a timely manner as well as being utilized according to their subcontracting plan.

8. What happens if there is a payment dispute? Does WSSC get involved?

If there is an issue with a subcontractor not receiving payment from a Prime, The Compliance Team will perform an investigation by communicating with both the Prime and the subcontractor on the contract.

9. How does a company find out about new projects coming out?

OSDI obtains a forecast monthly from Procurement and will distribute at outreach events or upon requests.

10. What makes you proud about your job?

I have been in Supplier Diversity for 10 years and it has been rewarding. I started out as a Program Specialist to encourage firms to apply for the SLBE Program. Therefore, I am familiar with the many of the firms that were brand new in the program. Not only are many of these firms still doing business with WSSC, but their businesses have expanded, and they have grown from Subcontractor to Prime. Now it's their turn to reach back and help other firms by providing subcontracting opportunities. Seeing the success of vendors who you've met and provided assistance with learning about the bidding process is what makes me proud.

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