Heroes in Diversity

Meet The Names And Faces Behind STL’s Greatest Champions of Business Diversity

Francoise Lyles-Wiggins,
Supplier Diversity Program Manager,
Bi-State Development

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Heroes in Diversity

The names & faces behind St. Louis’ greatest champions of business diversity

Françoise Lyles-Wiggins, Bi-State Development

What is your best advice to owners seeking contracts?
Small business owners can determine what opportunities may best match up with their capabilities by familiarizing themselves with the goods and services Bi-State Development and its five enterprises need for daily operations, facility maintenance, transit and non-revenue vehicles, and equipment supporting core functions. In addition, it is a good idea to learn more about what outside professional services support various departments at Bi-State Development and about upcoming construction projects, as well as bidding requirements. They should also reach out to Bi-State Development procurement and supplier diversity staff members, provide a business capabilities statement and take advantage of networking and outreach events.

What is the biggest barrier to getting contracts?
The primary barrier is not connecting with Bi-State Development in advance of the release of solicitations, requests for quotations, requests for proposals or sealed bids. After a small business owner and/or manager becomes familiar with Bi-State Development and identifies what their business can offer, then it is time to start tracking opportunities and solicitations.

Bi-State Development utilizes an on-line portal known as iSupplier to publish solicitations, requests for quotations, requests for proposals or sealed bids. In order to access opportunities, businesses must be registered users of the iSupplier system. By registering in iSupplier, businesses can manage and update their company’s information with Bi-State Development, receive notifications via email when contracting opportunities become available, request a bidder’s list and receive pre-bid dates. Submitting documents with information missing or not submitting all required items by the deadline will also be a barrier to being awarded a contract.

What is the process for MBEs contacting your business?
To find out more about what’s going on at Bi-State Development, businesses can go to www.bistatedev.org to monitor Bi-State Development news/meetings.

To sign up for iSupplier-New suppliers, businesses must register at www.bistatedev.org; select the “Let’s Collaborate” tab; choose the “Procurement” tab; click on “Current Opportunities” and then find the New Supplier Registration located under the iSupplier heading to begin the registration process.

For Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE) information regarding obtaining certification, compliance monitoring and enforcement procedures on Bi-State Development contracts and/or small business development, contact Fran by email at ftyleswiggins@bistatedev.org or call her at 314-982-1400 ext. 1398.

Stephanie Smith, Washington University

What is your best advice to owners seeking contracts?
Owners should be able to discuss their company’s ability and the true value they bring to Washington University. Owners should have a true understanding of contractual obligations and the company’s ability to perform within Washington University. Likewise, owners should seek to build relationships with larger firms for inclusion on large-scale projects. Washington University is a large organization with many individuals responsible for purchasing goods and services. It is important for a company to offer services within their area of expertise and ensure the timely delivery of services.

What is the biggest barrier to getting contracts?
The biggest barrier for minority- and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE) doing business with Washington University would be the size of our organization. Most of our contracts are large contracts that require a great deal of resources and experience. Companies can find their resources stretched to the limit and face challenges meeting the demand.

Supplier Diversity focuses on reducing the barriers for MWBE to do business with Washington University. Our office works with MWBE by reviewing their capabilities and attempting to find the “best fit.” We assist qualified MWBE increase their capacity and expertise through contracting opportunities on our campuses.

What are the most exciting opportunities for minority business owners this year and in the future?
It is difficult to pinpoint one exciting opportunity for MWBE at Washington University. There are a myriad of opportunities within each industry which might interest an MWBE. We have multiple RFPs on the street for goods and services.

We are always building or remodeling our existing structures. As such, there are numerous construction projects in the bidding pipeline ranging from $200,000 to $60 million. The building of relationships with large firms can provide MWBE an opportunity to partner and/or subcontract on Washington University projects.

What is the process for MBEs contacting your business?
The best way to contact our office is to email supplierdiversity@wustl.edu and provide information about your company. This begins the process of exploring potential opportunities for your company.

Name: Stephanie Smith
Organization: Washington University
Position: manager of supplier diversity
Contact information: Dr. Stephanie Smith
314-935-9470
stephsmith@wustl.edu
supplierdiversity@wustl.edu
Website: http://resourcemanagement.wustl.edu/supplier-diversity
Katrina Scott  The Resource Group, an Ascension subsidiary

What is your best advice to owners seeking contracts?

There are a few key areas that diverse business owners can focus on. First, it’s important for diverse business owners to research current market trends in detail so they know exactly what needs their product or service is meeting and how their product or service specifically provides value to organizations. Second, knowing your value proposition is key, and being able to clearly articulate that is equally important.

At The Resource Group, a subsidiary of Ascension, we are committed to building mutually beneficial relationships with diverse suppliers. We see the value this brings to our local economies and communities. We are committed to assuring that we are making the best decisions on behalf of our customers, so it’s critical that all suppliers, including diverse suppliers, demonstrate the value they bring. Finally, diverse suppliers should continually ask for feedback, even when they don’t secure business with a customer. This will allow them to better position themselves for the next round of bids or for the next customer.

What is the biggest barrier to getting contracts?

One of the biggest barriers diverse business owners face when pursuing contracting opportunities with potential customers is getting in the door. Larger, more established suppliers typically have greater resources as well as strong brand-name recognition compared to diverse businesses. The lack of brand recognition and awareness can make it challenging for diverse businesses to be considered. The Resource Group recognizes this barrier and takes steps to level the playing field. For example, we have put processes in place to ensure that smaller, diverse suppliers have a direct avenue to communicate with us and share their value proposition. This benefits us, as diverse suppliers frequently have high-quality, innovative products and services to offer, but more importantly, ensures equal access.

What are the most exciting opportunities for minority business owners this year and in the future?

In our continued efforts to engage diverse business owners, The Resource Group hosts annual symposiums where diverse businesses have the opportunity to learn more about The Resource Group and meet our leaders. These events create networking opportunities where participants can make connections, share about their organizations and engage in open dialogue.

What is the process for MBEs contacting your business?

The Resource Group welcomes you to register your business on our supplier registration portal by going to www.TheResourceGroup.com/Suppliers. Registration enables the User-Directed Strategic Sourcing team to access information about your organization, including capabilities, product and/or service descriptions, contact information, and more, in preparation for future contracts. From there, a member of our team will reach out to you directly.

If you encounter issues with this process, please call 314-733-8813 or email SupplierDiversity@TheResourceGroup.com.

Michelle Joseph, Magellan Health

What is your best advice to owners seeking contracts?

Magellan Health is committed to partnering with suppliers that enhance our organization’s value by offering innovative solutions and supporting our dedication to supplying our clients with the highest quality of service and performance. Business owners seeking contracts should look to solve a problem for Magellan Health. We expect our vendors to focus on a core competency, and future engagements may follow.

What is the biggest barrier to getting contracts?

As a large complex business, the biggest barrier to getting contracts is reaching the correct audience for your product/service. Once you have registered as a potential vendor, the Supplier Diversity team may assist with connecting you with the Magellan team. Proper due diligence on the business owners’ part is very beneficial. What group would benefit from the product/service offering? What makes your product/service offering unique? What challenge does your product/service offering solve for Magellan?

What are the most exciting opportunities for minority business owners this year and in the future?

Magellan Health is managing the fastest-growing, complex, high-cost areas of healthcare and leading the way in addressing today’s and tomorrow’s population health challenges. With this pursuit comes great change. While it is hard to predict exact opportunities, we know that our product offering evolution will provide many opportunities for vendors to help us lead humanity to healthy, vibrant lives.

What is the process for MBEs contacting your business?

Companies interested in doing business with Magellan Health should visit www.magellanhealth.com to understand more about our business, and then register as a vendor at supplierregistration.magellanhealth.com.

Upon completion of the vendor business profile, Magellan’s Strategic Sourcing department will be able to quickly identify the vendor’s business offerings for future opportunities. If a match occurs between Magellan business requirements and the vendor’s products and/or services, a sourcing manager may contact the vendor.

Michelle Joseph
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Position: sr. director vendor management & supplier diversity
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