



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact Gage Harter.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Chesterfield County

Program Title: Supplier Relations and Education

Program Category: Community and Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D.

Title: County Administrator

Signature: 

SUPPLIER RELATIONS AND EDUCATION

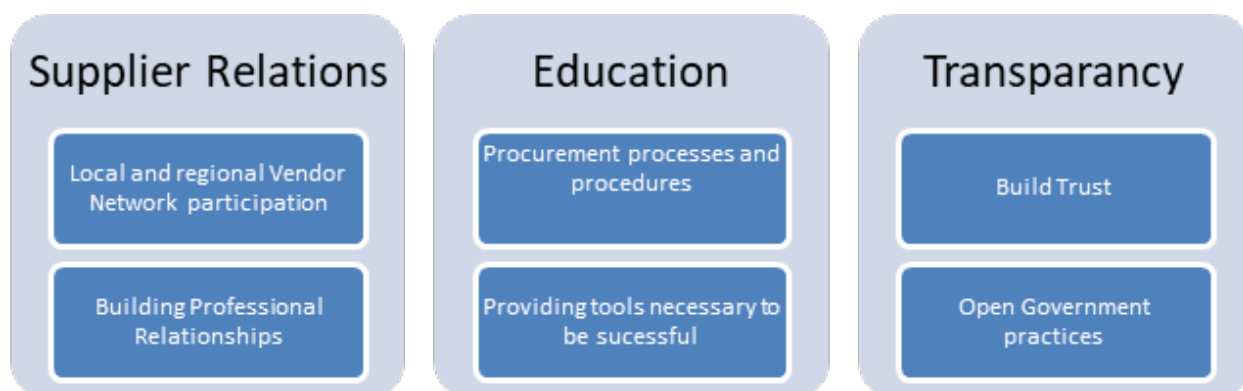
A DIVISION OF CHESTERFIELD COUNTY'S PROCUREMENT DEPARTMENT

Community and Economic Development

Executive Summary

The Chesterfield County Procurement Department created the Supplier Relations and Education program as an initiative to conduct Supplier Outreach and provide education to the vendor community. Challenges this program was designed to address are supply chain constraints and the desire to increase the County's diversity spend. The program serves to network with sources across the Commonwealth of Virginia with an emphasis on local and diversity businesses. The educational content of the program includes guidance on providing goods and services to the County and school divisions. Other information shared includes Procurement policies, procedures, registration access to our e-procurement system and the contacts needed to make connections at the end using department level. These efforts have increased registration in our e-procurement system, improved transparency regarding the procurement process and continues to provide a network of opportunities for sub-contractors.

Participating in procurement outreach events and providing educational workshops to the vendor community has significantly enhanced those professional relationships and provided vendors with the tools necessary for procurement opportunities.



SUPPLIER RELATIONS AND EDUCATION

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Identifying the Challenge/Need for the Program

Procurement has been challenged with identifying viable sources in the marketplace. This has been particularly prominent due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of varied sources can be attributed to businesses ceasing operations, difficulty in staffing, pricing fluctuations, or simply supply chain issues. Another factor in the creation of the Supplier Relations program was the decrease of participation (particularly from local businesses) in the solicitation process. This was derived from vendors not understanding how or where to start working with local government. The vendor community has communicated their inexperience with County procurement operations, policies, and procedures and how award selection and decisions are made. They indicated the need for education opportunities on finding County business opportunities and help with understanding how to respond to those requirements. The need was apparent to develop a Supplier Relations Program that would focus on community networking, identifying viable supplier sources, providing education, and building new vendor partnerships.

Description of the Program & Fulfillment

The Supplier Relations and Education Program provides education and networking opportunities to the local and regional business community. The goal of this program is to increase local and diversity

vendor participation by providing open communication, education opportunities, and transparency in Chesterfield County's procurement practices.

The program establishes the role of a Chief Supplier Relations Manager dedicated to building relationships and educating the vendor community about public procurement. Contractors and suppliers receive knowledge and resources on how to respond to Procurement opportunities by attending networking and outreach events and workshops which include information on the County's purchasing policies, procedures, and e-procurement system.

Workshops include:

- Overview of the procurement process
- Procurement terminology
- Understanding terms and conditions and insurance requirements
- Departmental delegated authority
- Navigating PInG, the County's e-procurement system for business opportunities
- Information available on the County's website

Outreach sessions include:

- PInG registration and assistance
- Current and Upcoming Projects
- Relevant hot topics in Procurement
- Networking opportunities with County departments
- Connections with other suppliers and subcontractors

In 2023, the County hosted the first biannual Outreach Event, the *Buyers and Sellers Connection Conference*. This event generated more than 150 attendees including County leadership, local and regional businesses, County and School departments. The event provided an overview of our e-procurement system, procurement thresholds, the County's annual spend report and one-on-ones with Senior Contract Officers. The reverse trade show also included personnel from County and School departments to discuss business opportunities with vendors.

In addition to the County programs, the Chief Supplier Relations Manager also partners with governmental and non-governmental agencies to promote the success of small businesses in the region. Those partnerships help provide the necessary tools to prepare vendors to respond to procurement opportunities as they become available. A representation of our "other partners" includes but are not limited to:

- Chesterfield County's Economic Development Department
- Richmond Regional Planning District
- Crater Planning District
- Commonwealth of Virginia Small Business Supplier Diversity Department
- Local Chambers of Commerce (Chesterfield County, Hispanic, and Asian Chambers)
- Metropolitan Business League
- APEX Accelerators

The Commonwealth of Virginia through its state agencies offer a small business set-aside program. The County is not bound by that program, but the County does have a policy in place directing County departments to proactively seek Diversity vendors as defined by the following business types:

- Small Businesses

- Woman Owned Businesses
- Minority Owned Businesses
- Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses
- Employment Services Organizations
- Chesterfield Businesses

Without a set aside preference program, the Supplier Relations staff must be strategic in its efforts to appeal to diverse businesses, as classified by the County, to engage and participate in opportunities that are competitive in nature. Suppliers Relations staff drive diversity spend through internal County departmental training to staff with delegated purchasing authority. This training reviews the department's procurement responsibilities when obtaining quotes for goods and/or services under their delegated authority. Training highlights Procurement law, County policies and procedures including the requirement to seek out and notify diversity businesses of potential opportunities. Another strategy the Supplier Relation staff employs to advance diversity opportunities, is to analyze individual spend at the department level and determine if any repetitive purchases under a department's delegated authority could be redirected to Diversity vendors. If Diversity vendors can provide the goods and/or services, a list of those sources are provided to the department during the training course.

While this program is in its inception, the County will continue to enhance their efforts to develop education and other means of communication. The program objective is to ensure resources and information are more accessible through technology related sources. Additional outreach events and workshops held in person are anticipated to increase Chesterfield County's visibility and commitment to the community. With the support of the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors,

County Executive Leadership, and our internal departments, we will continue to cultivate vendor relationships, strive to enhance diversity and local spend to have a profound effect for local and regional vendors as well as our community.

A model timeline of the program is below:

TIMEFRAME	PROGRAM TASK
Oct. 2022 – Dec. 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive decision to implement a Supplier Relations program. • Researching and communicating with regional partners, diversity, or supplier relation organizations to discuss their program. • Registering for Diversity or Supplier Relations memberships. • Performed outreach to internal departments (County and schools) in gaining support for participation in an outreach event. • Partnered with internal Media and Communications and Information Systems Technology to develop advertisements and an online registration portal. • Hosted the first ever Chesterfield County Buyers and Sellers Connection Conference. Attendance at the conference included representation from vendors, County, and school departments.
Future initiatives	<p>Focus on additional areas of expansion, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving on a Regional Committee to develop an Outreach Event in Fall 2024. • Development and implementation of a Chesterfield County Supplier Relations website.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hosting more frequent and specialized training opportunities to the vendor community• Participate and expand in Supplier Relations and Diversity Programs Outside of the region.• Continue efforts to provide procurement opportunities to Diversity Businesses as defined by the County (Small, Woman Owned, Minority Owned, Veteran Owned, Chesterfield and Employment Services) thru use of the County's delegated authority thresholds.• Continue efforts to seek greater opportunities for Diversity Vendors thru policy changes for Delegated Authority limits.
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The cost of the program

This program was developed and implemented with minimal impact to the operational budget. The cost to establish and advance this program has been taken from resources already available. There was a reorganization within the Procurement Department personnel which meant there was not a need to hire additional staff and as a result, no impact was made to the personnel budget, one FTE was allocated to this effort. Expenditures for the daily operations of this program were promotional items for advertising and the cost associated with those items did not exceed \$300.00. The large outreach event that will occur every two years will cost less than \$2,000 as it is being hosted at a County run facility. The County is currently in the process of a market rebrand. It is expected that less than \$100.00 will be spent to secure additional promotional items this fiscal year. Other services required to meet the needs of the program such as media marketing, registration portals,

supplier relations website development, etc., are performed by internal departments as part of day-to-day operations and are at no cost to the Procurement Department.

The results/success of the program

The program continues to mature, and the means utilized to measure the program is proving to be successful. This determination is based on data from 2022 and 2023. The results reveal an increase in all the following areas: vendor registration in PInG, the number of events the County has held or participated in (with the Small Business Supplier Diversity Division of the Commonwealth of Virginia, other Diversity organizations, regional partners) and the increase shown in Diversity Spend.

Measurable Categories	FY22	FY23	% increase
PInG Registration	480	572	19%
Outreach Events	7	34	385%
Diversity Spend	\$352,121,158	\$406,393,499	15.41%

The chart above is evidence of a significant increase in the County's efforts and the participation of the supplier community since the program's implementation. The County will continue to host and/or participate in Outreach Events, develop customizable education opportunities for suppliers interested in doing business with the County and continue to create and maintain relationships with the vendor community. The County is committed to ensuring the vendor community has a procurement resource and advocate within the agency to assist in navigating procurement policies and procedures as well as providing resources for other state and local agencies' procedures and systems.