

A Toolkit for the Business Enterprise Program

CEI is committed to supporting all procurement agencies, organizations, and institutions in Illinois in achieving a high level of success and sustainability in onboarding businesses owned by minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and veterans, to build their businesses by providing fair access to contracting opportunities within the State of Illinois.

The roadmap to establishing a successful BEP implementation leverages information, resources, programs, and diverse strategies while being flexible in how they can be put into effective practice by both small and large buying State entities.

What follows is a guideline established to serve as a starting point for procurement professionals and their supporting outreach and engagement teams to utilize for reference, and idea generation, in support of adapting to each entity's unique needs based on size, scope, volume, and growth of their procurement department and program.

This listing of BEP program enablement tools and techniques is presented here for your "use where appropriate" consideration. CEI also encourages an ongoing conversation with agency, college, and university leadership and staff as we work, learn, and grow to empower our current and future diverse supplier community.

Designing, implementing, operating, monitoring, and evaluating an entity's BEP achievement must begin with a thoughtful and measured plan appropriate for each entity's goals and objectives.

There are several best practices for developing a successful supplier diversity program implementation:

1. **Clearly defined goals and objectives:** The program should have clear and measurable goals and objectives to ensure that progress can be tracked and evaluated.
2. **Executive sponsorship:** The program should have support from senior leaders within the State agency, organization, or institution, who can provide the necessary resources and commitment to make the program successful.
3. **Collaboration with internal stakeholders:** The program should involve collaboration with internal stakeholders, including procurement, human resources, and diversity and inclusion teams, to ensure that the program aligns with the organization's overall diversity and inclusion goals.

4. **Supplier engagement and outreach:** The program should engage with a diverse range of suppliers, including minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned, and small businesses, to increase the pool of qualified suppliers and promote diversity in the supply chain.
5. **Supplier development and capacity building:** The program should provide support and resources to help diverse suppliers grow and develop their businesses, including training, mentorship, and access to capital.
6. **Monitoring and reporting:** The program should have a system for monitoring and reporting its progress and impact, including metrics on supplier diversity, spending with diverse suppliers, and supplier engagement.
7. **Continuous improvement:** The program should be reviewed and evaluated regularly to identify areas for improvement and ensure that it remains relevant and effective in meeting the organization's goals and objectives.

By implementing these best practices, state agencies can develop a solid and effective BEP achievement that promotes diversity and inclusion in their supply chain and delivers measurable benefits to internal and external stakeholders.

The next critical focus area is BEP marketing and outreach to current and new program participants. This outlines a marketing plan to attract and onboard potential suppliers to your Entity's purchasing opportunities.

Marketing Plan Executive Summary Example

This marketing plan outlines the strategies and tactics that can be selectively used to attract and onboard existing and future BEP businesses to an Entity's procurement opportunities. The program should focus on the following key areas:

- **Education and awareness:** Raising awareness of BEP benefits among the broad minority business community in the Entity's service area.
- **Promotion:** Promoting the entity to BEP firms through various channels, including online, print, social media, and event marketing.
- **Onboarding:** Providing support and resources to help BEP firms navigate procurement.

The marketing plan should be implemented over a period of one year. The goals of the plan are to:

- Increase the number of BEP firms participating in the purchasing Entity's program.
- Increase the amount of procurement dollars awarded to BEP firms.
- Improve the visibility and reputation of the purchasing Entity and BEP.
- Attract and onboard new participants to BEP.

Target Audience

The target audience for this marketing plan is certified BEP firms in the service radius of the State agency, public institutions of higher education, including community colleges, administering the supplier diversity participation efforts. The plan should also focus on reaching certified firms currently participating in BEP, as well as non-certified firms that are new to the BEP procurement process overall.

Marketing Strategies

The following marketing strategies should be used to reach the target audience:

- **Education and awareness:** The plan should focus on educating BEP-certified and non-certified firms about the program and its benefits. This will be done through various online, print, and social media channels. The plan could also include a webinar series to provide BEP-certified and non-certified firms with information about the procurement process.
- **Promotion:** The plan can promote the program to BEP-certified and non-certified firms through various channels, including an entity's current online, print, and social media outlets. The plan could also include a targeted email marketing campaign.
- **Onboarding:** The plan should provide support and resources to help BEP-certified and non-certified firms navigate the procurement process. This will include providing BEP-certified and non-certified firms with access to the State's procurement portal, as well as offering one-on-one mentoring (such as connecting them to a local Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) or Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) (<https://dceo.illinois.gov/smallbizassistance/beginhere/sbdc.html>)).

Marketing Tactics

The following marketing tactics should be used to implement the marketing strategies:

- **Online:** The marketing plan should use the Entity's website to promote its support for BEP. The website can include information and links about the program, its benefits, and how to participate. The Entity can also promote its BEP efforts through social media if it uses such platforms.
- **Print:** The marketing plan may create print materials, such as brochures and flyers, to promote the program. These materials could be distributed at community-based small businesses and other events attended by BEP-certified and non-certified firms.
- **Social media:** The marketing plan may use social media to promote the program. The plan could create a social media presence for the program and use it to share information about the program, its benefits, and how to participate.

- **Email marketing:** The marketing plan should use email marketing to promote the program. The plan should create a list of BEP-certified and non-certified firms and send them regular emails about the program's new announcements.
- **One-on-one mentoring:** The plan can also offer one-on-one mentoring to BEP-certified and non-certified firms interested in participating in the Entity's program. Procurement professionals should provide mentoring with experience working with BEP-certified, non-certified firms and small business development.

Evaluation

The success of the marketing plan should be evaluated based on the following metrics:

- **Number of BEP-certified and non-certified firms participating in the program.**
- **Amount of procurement dollars awarded to BEP-certified firms as prime and subcontractors.**
- **Visibility and reputation of the Entity and its BEP achievement.**

The plan should be evaluated every quarter. The evaluation results will be used to adjust the plan as needed.

Another goal of a successful implementation is to foster constructive relationships between prime and BEP subcontractors leading to successful procurement engagements.

Here are examples of several activities that Entity procurement and outreach teams can encourage to create business mentor relations between prime contractors and MBE subcontractors:

- **Mentorship programs:** An Entity can utilize CEI's Mentor/Protege program that matches BEP-certified firms with experienced prime contractors. This program can provide BEP-certified businesses with guidance and advice on competing for government contracts and help them develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.
- **Education programs:** The Entity can also provide education programs for BEP-certified and non-certified firms on how to bid on and win government contracts. These programs can cover the procurement process, contract law, and financial management.
- **Networking events:** The Entity can host or co-host networking and pre-bid events that bring together BEP-certified, non-certified firms and prime contractors. These events can provide opportunities for BEP-certified and non-certified firms to meet potential mentors and partners and to learn about new government contracting opportunities.

By encouraging these activities, state procurement agencies can help create a more diverse and inclusive government contracting marketplace. This can benefit BEP businesses, their employees, the community, and government stakeholders. These initiatives also lead to increased competition, innovation, and economic opportunity.

Illinois is fortunate to have a unique resource that can be called upon to help build the capacity and enhance the credentials of many certified BEP and potential BEP vendors.

Illinois Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTACs) offer various services that can benefit purchasing organizations looking to expand their procurement with certified vendors and those seeking BEP certification.

These services include:

- **Education and training:** SBDCs and PTACs can train purchasing organizations to identify and work successfully with certified BEP and potential BEP firms. This training can cover topics such as the benefits of supplier diversity, the procurement process, how to develop relationships with BEP firms, and navigating the BEP certification process.
- **Matchmaking:** SBDCs and PTACs can help purchasing organizations connect with BEP firms that are a good fit for their needs. This matchmaking can be done through online databases, trade shows, or other events.
- **Technical assistance:** SBDCs and PTACs can provide technical services to purchasing organizations on how to write and manage contracts with BEP firms. This assistance can cover contract compliance, payment terms, and dispute resolution topics.
- **Financial assistance:** Some SBDCs and PTACs offer financial aid to BEP firms looking to bid on government contracts. This assistance can be loans, grants, or other financial support.

In addition to these services, SBDCs and PTACs can also provide purchasing organizations with information on government procurement regulations, Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) certification programs, and other resources.

Here are some specific examples of how SBDCs and PTACs can help State purchasing organizations expand their procurement with BEP-certified and non-certified firms:

- An SBDC can help a purchasing organization develop a supplier diversity plan. The plan would outline the organization's goals for supplier diversity and the steps that the organization will take to achieve those goals.

- A PTAC can help a purchasing organization find BEP-certified or non-certified firms qualified to meet the organization's needs. The PTAC would use its BEP-certified and non-certified firms database to identify companies with the products or services the organization is looking for.
- An SBDC can train a purchasing organization's procurement team on how to write and manage contracts with BEP-certified and non-certified firms. The training would cover contract compliance, payment terms, and dispute resolution topics.
- A PTAC can help a purchasing organization get financial assistance for a BEP-certified or non-certified firm looking to bid on a government contract. The PTAC would work with the business to apply for a loan or grants that would provide the company with technical assistance in managing the funds.

By working with SBDCs and PTACs, purchasing organizations can increase their chances of success in expanding their procurement with BEP firms. These organizations offer various services to help purchasing organizations identify, connect, and work with BEP firms.

Regular monitoring and reporting is the final step in managing a high-performing supplier diversity program. Here are some best practices for monitoring and reporting:

1. **Establish clear metrics:** Establish clear metrics for tracking and reporting on the program's progress and impact, including spending with diverse suppliers, supplier diversity, and supplier engagement.
2. **Implement a tracking system:** Implement a tracking system for monitoring and reporting on the program's progress, including data on supplier demographics, spending with diverse suppliers, and supplier engagement.
3. **Regularly report results:** Regularly report results to internal stakeholders, including senior leaders, procurement, and diversity and inclusion teams, to keep them informed and engaged.
4. **Use data to drive continuous improvement:** Use the data collected through monitoring and reporting to drive continuous improvement and ensure that the program remains relevant and effective in meeting the organization's goals and objectives.
5. **Encourage transparency and accountability:** Encourage openness and accountability in the program by making data and results widely available and accessible to all stakeholders.
6. **Communicate the impact of the program:** Communicate the impact of the program to internal and external stakeholders, including customers and suppliers, to build awareness and support for the program.

By implementing these best practices, state agencies and public institutions of higher learning can ensure that their BEP participation is effectively monitored and reported on, which can help to drive continuous improvement and demonstrate the program's impact

and value to the entire organization and stakeholder community. Together we can accomplish the economically impactful goals and highest aspirations set forth by implementing the innovative Illinois procurement laws.