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Multnomah County

Annual report highlights county's commitment to supporting social equity through purchasing power

Wednesday, 2/27/13 - 9:13 am



From left: Tamiko Lawrence of Oregon Tradeswomen, county Purchasing Manager Brian R. Smith, Connie Ashbrook and Irais Gandarilla of Oregon Tradeswomen and Sophia Cavalli, county Purchasing supervisor



Multnomah County Purchasing's annual report to the Board of County Commissioners outlined the division's achievements in 2012 -- from contract system improvements and workforce development to community collaboration and sustainability.

The 56-page report "highlights the work that's done internally to support Purchasing's internal clients who provide many of the services which are critical to the county's achievement of its mission," Purchasing Manager Brian R. Smith told the board at its Feb. 21 meeting.

"But It also tells story of how the county supports economic development and organizations in the

community through our purchases of goods and services, Smith said. "What we buy and how we buy matters."

Purchasing's presentation highlighted its most recent social equity efforts, such as providing opportunities to local Disadvantaged Business Enterprises and Minority-owned, Women-owned, and Emerging Small Businesses (referred to collectively as DMWESB).

Sophia Cavalli, a Purchasing supervisor, explained how government purchasing power can be leveraged both by how goods and services are bought and how vendors are selected to deliver those goods and services.

Cavalli said Purchasing took those factors into account when Multnomah County began work on its two biggest projects to date: construction of the [East County Courthouse](#) and replacement of the [Sellwood Bridge](#).

During East County Courthouse construction, Purchasing worked with Construction Manager/General Contractor Howard S. Wright to develop a detailed subcontracting plan. And as a result of this plan, the project awarded more than 33 percent of the construction work to Minority-owned, Women-owned, and Emerging Small Businesses.

Additionally, apprentices completed more than 20,000 hours of work on the East County Courthouse, accounting for 29 percent of total workforce hours and surpassing the initial goal of 20 percent apprentice work hours.

For engineering services on the Sellwood Bridge replacement project, Purchasing worked with engineering services contractor, T.Y. Lin International to award \$2.1 million in contracts to 20 Disadvantaged, Minority-owned, Women-owned and Emerging Small Business subconsultants.

For Sellwood Bridge construction, Multnomah County Purchasing collaborated with Construction Manager/General Contractor Slayden-Sundt Joint Venture to develop what Cavalli described as "a comprehensive diversity plan for all phases of construction."

The plan includes a 20 percent DMWESB aspirational target for the project. And as of June 2012, more than \$8.1 million has been awarded to DMWESB subcontractors, accounting for more than 50 percent of all subcontracting.

Vijay Deodhar, CEO of 3D Infusion, a minority business enterprise that provided engineering support services to the Sellwood Bridge project, spoke at the board meeting about the importance of the county's DMWESB efforts.

"Even though we as a community have a long road ahead in terms of achieving social equity, I must acknowledge the true passion and serious commitment of the county's procurement officials who have created a nurturing and supportive environment for the growth of all certified firms," Deodhar said. "They have brought the social equity agenda to the front and center of the discussion and have brought accountability in the contracting process."

In addition to the large East County Courthouse and Sellwood Bridge projects, Purchasing sponsored community programs such as the [Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs Youth Academy](#), which helps develop entrepreneurship among Oregon high school students, as well as [Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc.](#), an organization dedicated to helping women break into skilled trades through education and mentoring.

Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc. graduate Irais Gandarilla, a journey-level sheetmetal worker, told the board how getting involved with the organization changed her life.

"I love what I do," Gandarilla said. "I found a great career working with my hands, working hard and always learning something new. The best part of it is, it's a good living wage with benefits and a

retirement. I never thought I could find something like this. Thanks to Oregon Tradeswomen opening my eyes to these apprenticeships, now I really see myself paving the way for other women -- minority women -- to find good, living-wage jobs.”

Overall contract awards to MWESBs reached an all-time high in 2012. Contracts awarded to MWESBs increased for the fourth consecutive year from 14.3 percent in 2008 to 38 percent at current levels.

“The task, as we look ahead, is to harness the energy and momentum we’ve demonstrated over the past year and play them forward,” said Cavalli.

[Click here to view Multnomah County Purchasing's 2012 report.](#)

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