



Outreach Plans

Outreach plans for purchasing are key to successfully engage small and diverse businesses in government contracting. When a public agency has a well-constructed outreach plan, it is better equipped to conduct effective outreach that can increase diverse spending. Follow the guidance outlined here to create a plan that will help you achieve your agency’s contracting goals while promoting inclusion and equity in public contracting.

A Successful Outreach Plan for Purchasing Is...



Purpose Driven

Be clear on your plan’s purpose by including an overview of your framework, evaluation of commitments, and goals. An example purpose statement is:

What is the purpose?

The purpose of the Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Procurement Outreach Plan is to:

- Establish parameters for outreach to Diverse Businesses that foster participation in contracting opportunities.
- Guide the evaluation and management of Supplier Diverse Business & Inclusion commitments during the Procurement Process
- Support the Governor’s inclusion goals as set by OMWBE.



Inclusion Focused

Your plan should draw attention to the valuable impacts of inclusive outreach. This includes helping the reader understand what outreach is, why we do it and what the risks are if we do not do it. Here is some sample language:

What is outreach?

An agency accomplishes meaningful outreach not with a checklist or stakeholder distribution list alone, but by actively engaging with potential contractors to raise awareness of opportunities and to expand the agency's network. Outreach also includes engaging with other individuals or groups impacted by procurement and contracting efforts and outcomes, even if they are not potential contractors.

Why we do outreach?

Outreach practices should reflect the state's population demographics and be responsive to demographic changes. Doing so:

- Supports diverse businesses, which improves the economic health and vitality of the state
- Supports the state's economic development plans and goals to increase opportunities for all businesses in the State of Washington
- Makes new businesses aware of business opportunities with the state
- Promotes efforts for non-discrimination
- Helps to keep the certification status of diverse firms current
- Meets the [legislative intent](#) for the state to develop procurement policies, procedures, and materials that encourage and facilitate state agency purchase of goods and services from Washington small businesses
- Helps decrease disparities in state contracting and procurement

How do we accomplish inclusive outreach?

- Purposeful communication, in advance, to make connections with diverse businesses and promote opportunities for supplier diversity
- Connect with diverse businesses by building community relationships such as reaching out to community groups, business associations, etc.
- Analyze and inventory sources, firms, and partnerships the agency uses to locate gaps or opportunities for increased supplier diversity – fill any gaps by reaching out to businesses or organizations that were missed before



What are the risks if we do not conduct outreach?

By not conducting consistent and comprehensive outreach, purchasers of goods and services may experience:

- Decreased competition and increased cost in state contracts
- Missed increases to innovation and creativity in the supply of goods and services
- Negative impacts on the viability of diverse businesses; important facets of the state's economy and economic resiliency
- Lack of alignment with the intent of state law, the Legislature, and Governor
- Failure to qualify and include new businesses to keep pace with the State of Washington's dynamic and growing business population

Engagement Centered

Outreach plans should contain language that explains how the agency will conduct outreach with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The Washington State Department of Transportation's [Inclusion Plan](#) and [Engagement Principles](#) are good examples.

Step 1: Conduct Outreach

- Build relationships and promote contracting opportunities in partnership with other state agencies, nonprofits, and other organizations
- Identify outreach gaps by examining current outreach, recording who is responding to procurements and attending events, and looking for communities that may be underrepresented. Create a schedule for outreach to the diverse business community and make sure this schedule aligns with agency messaging and target markets
- Engage in post-outreach follow up to gain feedback for improvements and positioning for ongoing or future business opportunities

Step 2: Establish Roles and Responsibilities

Have clear roles and responsibilities for your outreach team. Below are some examples:

Agency Heads

Agency heads are necessary to support supplier diversity initiatives in general and outreach in particular. They ensure allocation of resources for outreach and assign staff to conduct outreach. In the absence of the Agency Director, this responsibility rests with the next senior level of authority, or their designee

Category Owner

The Category Owner is the person(s) responsible for the purchasing activity for the agency. Examples include the purchase of office supplies, information technology, real



estate, or administrative consultants, whether for the agency, division, or facility. The Category Owner may also coordinate, evaluate, and monitor inclusion plans.

Coordinator for Supply Chain Diversity & Inclusion

The Coordinator for Supply Chain Diversity & Inclusion is a liaison between internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. They conduct outreach to invite and qualify diverse businesses for the needs of the Agency and Category Owner. This individual may provide technical assistance and guidance related to Diversity & Inclusion within the agency's procurement outreach process.

Outcome Accountability

How can public agencies hold themselves accountable for their outreach? Agencies must be accountable for the outcomes of their actions and outreach to build trust with the businesses they serve. This includes advising businesses on how to navigate through government processes, connecting them with new opportunities, and developing meaningful partnerships. Below are some strategies to create accountability in your agency:

- Measure accountability by creating and defining outcome measures and plan out how they will be shared transparently and incorporated into your agency's outreach plans and activities
- Have outreach staff complete available cultural awareness/sensitivity, implicit bias, and equity training
- Seek feedback – using surveys, debriefs, and other methods – from stakeholders consistently, including businesses, successful and unsuccessful bidders, and community leaders and organizations. For a list of community resources, [click here](#)
- Work with OMWBE to help your agency develop strategies to improve your outreach and support your efforts to meet diverse spending goals

Continuous Improvement

Outreach plans should describe agency internal processes for ensuring a culture of quality assurance and improvement.

- Assess feedback gathered and applied to your procurement process (i.e. bid debrief feedback)
- Survey contractors and partners and use the information gathered to make meaningful improvements to outreach efforts
- Conduct regular performance and process reviews (i.e.: outreach, certification, contract) Examine trends in diverse contracting participation to guide future efforts or changes