

Small, Minority, Women and Veterans Business Owners (SMWVBO) Conference

Frequently asked questions

What is the SMWVBO Conference?

A forum for **Small, Minority, Women and Veterans Business Owners (SMWVBO)** to develop relationships, acquire knowledge and access opportunities that exist with public and private sector entities for the procurement of good and services.

A forum to further enhance the knowledge of procurement staff of the availability and ability of local firms with the desire to do business.

How long has it been held? Why in December?

This is the eleventh year. December is the year end for SMWBO and a time for planning the work flow and need for contracts for the following year. It is the year end for corporations that have developed their budgets for the following year and are ready to start the business process. And, it is the first quarter for public entities that have budgets and are spending them.

How did it get started?

On April 10, 2001, Bexar County Commissioners Court approved Administrative Policy 8.0 – Small, Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise Program, which established the county’s program. A very significant component of the policy is to maximize area resources without duplicating services. With that in mind, the SMWBE Program Manager worked with the SMWBE Advisory Committee to develop the program and created the conference.

Since the county did not have a facility to hold such an event, the SMWBE Program Manager submitted a recommendation to Judge Wolff to request his leadership on this proposed event. He led the effort to acquire the partnership with the City of San Antonio in order for the county to use the convention center and combine resources for this event, since neither the county nor city had held such an event in the past.

The SMWBE Program Manager met with several of her public entity counterparts to solicit their support and commitment to be an exhibitor. Several county departments were asked to provide support since the SMWBE Program Office was a staff of one.

During the second year, the Private sector certification agency was invited to join the county and city efforts. The Central and South Texas Minority Business Council (CSTMBC) expanded their administrative operations to San Antonio after the announcement of Toyota. The CSTMBC Board has members that represent Washington Mutual, Toyota, HEB and Boeing. The partnership helps to assist the county staff with implementation of the Tax Phase in Guidelines, which outlines commitments from those entities to do business with local and MWBEs.

In 2006, an aggressive effort was added to outreach to the Veterans business owners.

Why does the County hold this conference?

The SMWVBO Conference is an opportunity for the county Purchasing Department to make direct contact with local vendors. SMWBEs can get their questions answered and meet the buyers who make decisions daily to solicit or recommend award that will directly impact their business.

It also provides a place for other county departments to provide information regarding their services or programs for SMWBEs. They include the County Clerk, Tax Office, District Attorney - Hot Checks Section, and Dispute Resolution Office.

What makes this conference different from other similar events held by local chambers?

The SMWVBO Conference strongly encourages SMWBO to spend their time wisely as attendees and not be an exhibitor. Local chamber trade shows are usually designed to enhance member business opportunities through exhibiting.

However, the conference is open to anyone that would like to be an exhibitor. The county SMWBE Program Manager has received comments from several SMWBO that did exhibit in the past years that they now make a concerted effort to attend and visit with the numerous procurement officials.

The conference does have several large minority owned businesses that exhibit each year because they have subcontracting opportunities for other SMWVBO.

Because of the tremendous contributions of the county, city and sponsors, the event is free to attend and includes meals. The cost to the exhibitor is very reasonable and it allows more local entities participation which also includes meals for all staff.

Why should a local SMWVBO attend?

The Conference is designed in an attempt to meet the needs of those in several areas:

1. A person who owns a business that is available and has the capacity to do business with the public and private sector
2. A person who owns a business that is available, but needs help with building the capacity to do business with the public and private sector
3. A person who owns a business that is performing work in the private sector, but has not sought public sector opportunities (and vice versus)
4. A person who owns a business and needs help by getting technical or financial assistance
5. A person who has the desire to start a business and would like to be prepared, know what opportunities and assistance exist
6. A person who may be working a job today, but would like to start a business one day in the future.
7. A person who would like to network with other business owners, and public and private sector staff and leaders to enhance their development and overall quality of life.