

HSD supplier diversity program earns accolades

Nearly eight years ago, the Hazelwood School District Board of Education adopted an aggressive supplier diversity program to provide opportunities for the meaningful participation of minority business enterprises (MBE) and women business enterprises (WBE). Since that time, the District has displayed a significant commitment to the development of MBEs and WBEs in our community.

Small minority and women business enterprises often cannot fairly compete without supplier diversity programs like Hazelwood's.

According to Kevin Cross, director of purchasing and supplier diversity, HSD has earned several accolades for the supplier diversity program, including the St. Louis Minority Supplier Development 2008 "Institution of the Year Award" and the 2007 MOKAN "Institution of the Year Award."

The Fletcher Company LLC, an MBE, has been awarded nine HSD construction projects, totaling more than \$6.5 million. Theodore Fletcher, president, said HSD's diversity initiative has allowed his company to survive and continue to grow in a very difficult market.

"Small MBE firms are often unable to compete with the larger, more established non-minority companies," he said. "As a small firm, it is often difficult to get the opportunity to prove yourself competent without a past project's history. Personal relations and networking with owners by established majority companies is often hard for minority firms to overcome and break through, thus the cycle of exclusion is continued.

"Fortunately for us, the Hazelwood School District has a diversity initiative in place that demonstrates genuine interest and concerns for MBEs," he continued. "Through their approach of unbundling large contract packages, and encouraging networking, along with oversight of the general contractors' due diligence, The Fletcher Company has been able to successfully compete for projects with the district."

Through the supplier diversity program, HSD has set the following goals:

Services - MBE - 25 percent
Supplies - MBE - 15 percent
Construction - MBE - 25 percent

District purchases for the year ending in June, 2011 indicate that the District has attained more than 26 percent MBE participation in services and 33 percent MBE participation in construction. At 8.3 percent, the supplies participation fell short of the goal.

The goals (s) for WBE participation for services, supplies and construction is 5 percent. HSD has currently attained more than 3 percent WBE participation in both supplies and services. HSD has overwhelmingly surpassed the WBE goal in construction with a current WBE participation of 42 percent.

Although HSD fell short of the MBE goal for supplies and the WBE goals for both supplies and services, it is important to note that largest amount of spending occurs in the construction area.

Rodney Evans, CEO of RMD Solutions, LLC, is appreciative of the work HSD had done to develop minority-owned businesses.

"They have become more than just a customer for RMD Solutions, we consider HSD a trusted family member and friend," he said. "We thank you for all of your support over the years and doing what is right with your diversity program."

The Simms Building Group, an MBE, completed the renovations to Hazelwood East Middle School in 2007 and later completed renovations at Armstrong, Jana and Jury elementary schools.

"...the knowledge that we gained while working with the district played an invaluable role in our ability to acquire new clients such as The Boeing Company, Monsanto Company, HMS Host, and Eagle Bank & Trust," said Floyd Simms, president.

Cross said the District continually works to surpass the goals in all areas. HSD has participated in the St. Louis Minority Supplier Development Council (SLMSDC) Business Fair and a program sponsored by the St. Louis Airport Authority that helps minority and women-owned businesses learn strategies on earning

business with different organizations. HSD also attends SLMSDC Association for Minority Purchasing events and is represented on the St. Louis Council of Construction Consumers Diversity Committee.