



Audience
Table Talk (Office/Departments)



DEI level
Beginner



Time Allocation
30-45 minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Gain a basic understanding of how to search for diverse suppliers.
2. Understand the key elements of an effective supplier diversity outreach strategy.

Definitions

Diverse Business: A diverse business is generally defined as a business that's at least 51% owned and operated by an individual who's part of a traditionally underrepresented or underserved group. Common classifications are minority-owned business enterprises (MBEs), woman-owned business enterprises (WBEs), and small-business enterprises (SBEs). Businesses owned by other groups, such as LGBTQ+, veterans, and persons with disabilities, may also be considered diverse businesses.

■ Content

■ How to Find Diverse Businesses:

- Leverage community organizations and business associations. In many areas, there are local business associations, chambers of commerce, city/county agencies, and community organizations that have already identified diverse businesses as part of their membership. Reach out to these organizations to discuss their purpose and whether they can connect you with any diverse businesses. Some may even share their membership lists with you.
- Attend local business networking events. Another great way to meet diverse businesses is to participate in local events focused on networking with local businesses. Chances are, many of the aforementioned community organizations host regular meet & greets, lunch & learns, expos, etc. that are designed specifically to highlight local diverse businesses. Events like this are great opportunities to connect with several different business owners and start a dialogue to identify the right partners for your company.
- Contact national and local certification agencies. There are many city, county, and state agencies that certify diverse businesses. Reach out to your local government office and ask whether they grant certifications. Many of them post their directories of diverse businesses online. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has also established a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program in every state. Contact your state DOT for more information or visit the U.S. DOT website (link to: <https://www.transportation.gov/osdbu/disadvantaged-business-enterprise/state-dot-anddisadvantaged-business-enterprise-web-pages>). In addition, there are national organizations that certify diverse businesses. Examples include the National

Minority Supplier Development Council (link to: <https://nmsdc.org/>) and the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (link to: <https://www.wbenc.org/>).

Outreach to Diverse Firms: Once you've identified diverse firms, think about how you can engage with these businesses. Consider hosting an open house, meet & greet, or networking session so you can begin building relationships and identifying potential partners. If you have a large project on the horizon, you could also use that as an opportunity to host an event for diverse businesses and begin broadening your network. Below are a few things to keep in mind to get the most out of any outreach event:

- Pay special attention to your audience and who you invite. Ensure the attendee list and the possible opportunities are in sync and limit the time variance between first and subsequent invitations. No one should be put at a disadvantage because they were informed of an opportunity long after others were aware of the same opportunity.
- Consider grouping similar scopes together. For example, invite all interior finishes to attend at one time and mechanical/electrical/plumbing firms at another. Mention creative ways these firms can develop partnerships with each other that helps increase their combined capacity threshold.
- If you plan to share upcoming project opportunities at your event, be sure to provide clear direction regarding scopes of work, union requirements, timelines, and other important information. Identify points of contact for each project opportunity.
- Be mindful of the time and location of your event. For example, asking a small business owner to attend an event in the middle of the workday could be a barrier. Similarly, holding an outreach event at the end of the workday at an upscale restaurant may not be very practical. Select venues where attire and time of day are not limiting factors when it comes to attendance.
- When promoting your event, be sure to include a point of contact in case people have questions about how to RSVP, agenda, or other event logistics.
- Have a plan in place to follow up with attendees after your event. Have a sign-in sheet to collect names, emails, business names, etc. Send a thank you note to attendees and be sure to share any relevant materials/information from your event with them afterward.
- If you're serving food/beverages or have any additional event needs (ex. audio/visual), consider reaching out to local diverse businesses to procure these items/services.



Discussion Questions

- 1 Does your company already have relationships with diverse business? Who are they? What items/services do they provide?
- 2 Do you know of any local organizations or certifying agencies that could help you identify diverse businesses? Does anyone in your company already have a relationship with any of these organizations?
- 3 Has your company hosted events for diverse businesses in the past? Are there future events planned? If not, should you consider hosting one?