HOW TO START A SUPPLIER DIVERSITY PROGRAM

Based on data and successful best practices, we've compiled a list for your company to follow. Here are best practices that all your employees should know:

• Supplier diversity should be operated out of the procurement department, with one person responsible for it. The diversity department should be in frequent communication with this person.

• Supplier diversity should exist within the context of your company's business goals, supply chain and competitive-market climate.

• It's important to measure your success against other organizations and industry norms.

• It's critical to assess Tier II (subcontractor) supplier diversity as well as Tier I and to train your prime suppliers to find and mentor diverse suppliers.

Discussion Questions for Employees

Does your company have a supplier-diversity program? If it does, how well are its goals and successes communicated to employees?
What do you know about supplier diversity at your company? How can you get the word out about its importance?

How does supplier diversity help your company reach its business goals?
Use this teachable moment to honestly discuss different styles, including confrontation/criticism, self-promotion/branding, and decision-making.

Is your company helping your diverse suppliers grow?
Does your company offer educational opportunities and mentoring for suppliers, many of whom are small-business owners? This can include financial and technical education. Does your company make a significant effort to help its prime contractors find and nurture diverse suppliers — and does it track Tier II supplier diversity?