Supplier Diversity and Strategic Business Opportunity

By D. Craig Taylor, Executive Director

The minority and women business population is increasing in number, purchasing power, and business development activity. This record growth is enabling minority and women owned firms to have significant economic power as consumers and business owners. Their clout positions them to be invaluable strategic suppliers and business partners in the years ahead. Forward-thinking organizations have recognized this status and are implementing formal supplier diversity programs to stay ahead. They are also leading the way in a multicultural marketplace by infusing supplier diversity into their main business processes by unique and creative ways.

The University of Minnesota views supplier diversity as a strategic business prospect. We have found that the most promising opportunity to explore new markets is through supplier diversity. Supplier diversity is the process of sourcing supplies from women and minority businesses. This presents an opportunity for organizations, like the University, to gain a competitive advantage in urban communities, by partnering with key stakeholders within the rapidly changing demographics. With increasing populations and business growth rates, it is imperative that urban Universities, like ours, learn how to infuse minority employees, customers, and suppliers into our business processes in order to gain and maintain a long-term competitive edge.

We have found at the University that success with supplier diversity starts with the culture of the organization. As an organization, we value diversity and make a commitment to view diversity as a foundational aspect of doing business. We have long settled the philosophical debate about the value of diversity and/or supplier diversity. Our organizational culture is enthusiastic about supplier diversity and actively pursues it and encourages buyers and other end users to seek creative ways to partner with women and minority firms in our communities at large.

To learn more about BCED and its mission, visit www.bced.umn.edu.

Spotlight

BCED’s New Team Member

Jeanine Chambers joined BCED as our new Executive Office & Administrative Specialist on October 2, 2012. Jeanine relocated to Minneapolis from Las Vegas in 1999, and accumulated several years of legal assistant experience with several Twin Cities law firms, including Merchant & Gould, Miserli & Kramer, and Mackall, Crounse & Moore. Between her first position with Las Vegas-based law firm, Clark, Greene & Associates, and her last position as executive assistant at The Dolan Company, a legal media publishing company, she has specialized in nine different areas of law, such as intellectual property, commercial real estate, family law, corporate transactions, general business, and mergers and acquisitions.

Jeanine obtained an associate degree in paralegal studies from Inver Hills Community College before pursuing a bachelor’s degree in psychology from the University of Minnesota. She plans on getting her master’s degree in either business administration or psychology (but is also considering both!). During her free time, she enjoys traveling, skydiving, horseback riding, playing sand volleyball, and has recently taken up target shooting.

We welcome Jeanine to the Office for Business & Community Economic Development, and are happy she has joined our team!
**PROGRAM UPDATE**

**Computer Refurbishing Program and Free Classes**

The Computer Refurbishing Program at BCED’s B-Tech Center (located at UROC in North Minneapolis) relies on donations of used computers from individuals, organizations, and corporations to ensure that families and communities have the technology access and education to expand their economic and educational opportunities. Donated computers are wiped of existing data in compliance with Federal data-wiping standards before being prepared for donation to local individuals, families, and organizations. Individuals receiving computers participate in free computer literacy classes to maximize the benefit they receive from the donated computers.

Between October 2012 and January 2013, the Computer Refurbishing Program distributed 71 refurbished computers to individuals or families and 12 to nonprofit organizations. This was made possible thanks to individuals and companies who donated their computers for refurbishing.

BCED thanks the following donors from 2012: Mike Byron, Phoenix Alternatives Inc., UMN Disability Services, UMN Graduate School, UMN Coordinated IT Services Unit, UMN Carlson School of Management, and UMN Humphrey Institute.

If you are ready to donate and decommission your old PCs or need more information about the computer refurbishing program, please contact Wilson Maceno at wmaceno@umn.edu or 612-624-3778.

**PROGRAM UPDATE**

**Growth Accelerator Program Kickoff 2013 with New Cohort**

A new cohort for the GAP program launched on January 3, 2013, with a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm at the kick-off event. There are 11 teams participating, comprised of a Business Advisor, Business Owner and Student Assistant. Following the pairing of the teams, all participants engaged in a dynamic workshop entitled, “High Performance Management Systems,” facilitated by Chuck Bolton, a sought after executive leadership coach, speaker and author. The businesses participating in GAP are from diverse industries, which makes the round-table discussions especially compelling. All 11 teams have met at least once for their face-to-face meetings. In addition, the teams communicate amongst all the other participants via a group established on LinkedIn.

The GAP program includes a workshop every month facilitated by a subject expert. This month, the workshop was held on January 24th, and covered the topic of “Customer Experience and Customer Service.” Mary Pouli, the workshop facilitator, received tremendous reviews from the attendees. The next workshop in February will cover “Financial Management.” The next session of GAP will launch April 4th.

For more information about GAP and other Business Development Services, contact Senior Business Consultant Diane Paterson at pater050@umn.edu or 612-624-3578.

**PROGRAM UPDATE**

**Community Health Initiative Begins Spring Term Projects**

The Community Health Initiative (CHI) is a unique effort that focuses directly on communities that face public health disparities and other socio-economic issues. This initiative is a direct result of a partnership between Medica and the University of Minnesota’s Office for Business & Community Economic Development, which is committed to advancing the quality of life for Minnesota communities.

CHI Student Consulting Projects offer experiential learning opportunities for students to work on projects identified by local community-based nonprofit organizations or small businesses involved in addressing public health issues. Various projects may focus on medical research, health administration and outreach, family planning, feasibility studies or business needs. Some examples of needs include: business planning, marketing & communication plans, finance support, accounting, human resources, and program development.

The Spring 2013 semester projects are underway. Qualifying community-based nonprofits and small businesses include those located in the Twin Cities metro area that serve economically disadvantaged areas and communities of color, have been in operation for at least three years and are in the health care or medical industry. Nonprofits applying must be 501(c)(3) certified.

For more information on the CHI Program, visit www.bced.umn.edu/CHI or contact Nedy Windham at windh003@umn.edu or 612-625-2053.
SUCCESS STORY

Highlights of the Broadband Access Project

The Broadband Access Project (BAP), funded by a $2.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce (Award #27-42 B10003) with matching support of $741,000 from the University of Minnesota and community partners, has drawn to a close. This three-year project ended on December 31, 2012, and the Public Computer Centers (PCC) created through the BAP have been transferred entirely to community partners that hosted these labs during the project. Apprentices’ last day on site was Friday, December 21. The PCC’s will be directed by community partners starting in 2013. Each partner will be making their own decisions as to the continuation of their PCC, as consistent with the goals of the project. Some PCCs’ will remain open to the public, while others will focus primarily on internal clients.

Highlights of the BAP since 2010 include:

The creation and enhancement of 12 Public Computer Centers with 143 workstations in low-income areas throughout Minneapolis and St. Paul.

EVENT SERIES

The Construction Expo 2012: 10th Year Anniversary

Craig Taylor, BCED Executive Director, extended a warm welcome to Expo attendees and reviewed statistics regarding WMBE inclusion at the University. Craig also thanked the 52 companies who sponsored exhibit booths at the event.

The Metro Area Small Contractors Alliance (MASCA) presented an informational workshop on their mission, function and goals. Members of MASCA were also in attendance to introduce their individual companies and services they provide to assist General Contractors.

The Awards Incentive and Recognition (AIR) Luncheon was another highlight of the Expo. JE Dunn Construction received “General Contractor of the Year,” Reiling Construction received the “WMBE Stellar Award,” Visions, Inc., “Supplier of the Year,” Prime Therapeutics was recognized with a “WMBE Stellar Award” and Medica received the “Corporate Star Award.” Laurie Scheich, Associate Vice President, Auxiliary Services, received the 2012 “Fitz Leadership Award” for outstanding leadership and commitment in supporting the Regents policy on “Small, Targeted Business & Urban Community Economic Development.”

2012 was the 10th year for the Construction Expo. Seven of the Fifty-Two exhibitors have sponsored an exhibit booth at every Expo since 2002. We would like to extend a special “Thank You” to these companies for their continued support in our efforts to “Impact, Inspire and Invest” in Community Economic Development, they are, Bald Eagle Erectors, B & L Supply, Hunt Electric Corporation, Kraus Anderson Construction, McGough Construction, Mortenson Construction and Veit Companies.

For more information about the Construction Expo, contact Sharon Banks at banks016@umn.edu or 612-626-8043.
PARTNER PROFILE

Advancing Health Care in our Community

Medica is a non-profit corporation that provides health insurance products for the individual, family, group, senior and government markets as well as a health management company, a charitable grant-making foundation and a research institute. The University of Minnesota has partnered with Medica as our sole medical plan administrator for University faculty and staff.

In 2006, Medica partnered with the Office for Business and Community Economic Development (BCED) to create the Community Health Initiative (CHI), which is a unique effort that focuses directly on communities that face public health disparities and other socio-economic issues. Through Medica’s outstanding support and commitment, CHI has produced significant outcomes and value for both the University student community as well as the external community. It is a world-class model that successfully demonstrates the far-reaching impact of a true University-Corporate partnership and how these efforts can directly affect the communities we serve.

CHI provides resources to help community-based nonprofit organizations and businesses that impact the quality of health in diverse communities through: 1) scholarships to students from historically underrepresented groups; 2) paid full-time summer internships with healthcare and social service organizations; 3) graduate student consulting projects with organizations that serve socially and economically disadvantaged communities or communities of color, and 4) grants to programs and organizations involved in health disparities research.

Through the generous financial contributions made by Medica, CHI has provided over 160 scholarships, 75 full-time summer internships, 56 student consulting projects and several grants to University-driven programs that conduct health disparities research. The benefits and impact of this commitment to our nonprofit and business community and to the University students whose lives have been transformed by this program, is extraordinary.

In 2012, Medica was the recipient of the BCED Corporate Star Award, in recognition of their exemplary efforts to support the University of Minnesota’s public service and outreach mission through partnerships that help to build stronger and healthier urban communities.

For more information on the CHI Program, visit www.bced.umn.edu/CHI or contact Nedy Windham at windh003@umn.edu or 612-625-2053.

Corporate Star awarded to Medica

UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

Business Basics Workshop
Friday, March 15, 2013
9:00 am — 11:00 am
For more information or to register, visit www.bced.umn.edu/bds-events.php

One Page Business Plan
Saturday, April 6, 2013
8:30 am — 3:00 pm
For more information or to register, visit www.bced.umn.edu/bds-events.php

Applications for Community Health Initiative (CHI) Summer Internships are due by May 8, 2013. Local public health organizations and businesses interested in hosting a CHI Intern should apply at www.bced.umn.edu/CHI. Contact Nedy Windham at windh003@umn.edu with any questions.

Applications for the Junior Entrepreneurs of Minnesota (JEM) Summer Camp will be available in Spring of 2013. For more information, contact Maki Kawase at 612-624-8597 or kawa0034@umn.edu.