



Charleston County News Release

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See photo of previous workshop: <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/NewsImages/sbe.htm>

County Offers Free Workshops for Small Businesses on Feb. 21 and March 27

Over 70 businesses now certified with Charleston County Government

Charleston County's Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Program, the first of its kind in South Carolina, began five months ago and is a remarkable success.

So far, over 70 local businesses have become certified with the County, and more are currently going through the process. The last workshop was held on Jan. 24, and approximately 70 businesses attended.

Charleston County Government will be holding free SBE workshops on the following dates:

- **Thursday, Feb. 21, 2008**
How to do Business with the city, county, state and federal government – An overview of the public procurement process and how to prepare your bids. This class will be held from 6-8 p.m. at the Lonnie Hamilton, III Public Services Building; 4045 Bridge View Drive; North Charleston, S.C. 29405 (Room B339, the Emergency Operations Center conference room).
- **Thursday, March 27, 2008**
How to do business with Charleston County – (this is a repeat of information provided at the first SBE seminar held in November 2007) Learn how to become certified as a Small Business Enterprise, locate bid opportunities, and be placed on bid lists. This class will be held from 2 - 4 p.m. at the Lonnie Hamilton, III Public Services Building; 4045 Bridge View Drive; North Charleston, S.C. 29405 (Room B339, the Emergency Operations Center conference room).

Business owners can register online for the upcoming workshops at www.charlestoncounty.org.

Business owners who attend the workshop and bring the following documents with them can become fully certified even before leaving the workshop:

- Copy of signed business tax returns for the past three years
- Copy of current driver's license (or other government identification card)
- Copy of deed, rental or lease agreement showing business address (a post office box is not acceptable for business address)
- Copy of any applicable business license(s)

"Interest and attendance at these workshops has been tremendous and even better than initially expected," said SBE Program Manager Barrett Tolbert. "It was particularly rewarding for the member businesses to be able to meet with County department heads and Procurement Department personnel to discuss possible future business opportunities with the County. We hope to have a repeat of this meet-and-greet session at the upcoming workshops."

The SBE Program is race and gender neutral, with an emphasis on growing and enhancing small companies to help them reach the level of capability to do business with local, state and federal government agencies.

Business owners who are interested in becoming certified go through a short and simple process to participate in the program, which begins with completion of a simple, one-page application (available at www.charlestoncounty.org). During each of the workshop seminars, County staff will be available to assist business owners in completing the application.

Oversight of the SBE Program falls under Charleston County's Contracts and Procurement Department Director, and the program is administered by the County's SBE Program Manager, Tolbert. The concept for the program was developed through a disparity study that was commissioned by County Council in 2006.

The following are eligibility requirements for certification under the program:

- Gross revenues of \$7.5 million or less (as averaged over the previous three years)
- Eligible owner is actively involved in the daily management and operations of the business
- Business has been actively in service for the preceding twelve months
- Applicable business licenses, fees and Charleston County taxes are current

Additional goals of the SBE Program are:

- To enhance contract competition
- To establish utilization goals for SBE firms' participation on County contracts
- To conduct an outreach program with features such as the upcoming workshops, which will aid entrepreneurs in business development and get them ready for competing for County contracts

To learn more, contact the Charleston County Procurement Office:

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Visit the Charleston County Web site at www.charlestoncounty.org for news, services and up-to-date information relating to Charleston County Government.