



## Charleston County News Release

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# County's Small Business Enterprise Program a Sponsor of the 2008 Business Opportunity Conference in August

*Regional conference brings opportunity and dollars to local economy*

Charleston County Government's Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Program is one of the sponsors for the 2008 Business Opportunity Conference, which will be held August 4-6 in North Charleston.

The conference is being held by the Carolinas Minority Supplier Development Council, which is a non-profit corporation chartered to enhance business opportunities for minority-owned companies by providing certification as well as creating networking opportunities with corporate members to promote minority business development.

"We are excited to be so highly involved in the upcoming conference," said Barrett Tolbert, Charleston County SBE Program Manager. "Not only will the conference help minority businesses grow, but having it here in Charleston helps our local economy as well."

The Charleston County SBE Program supported the Carolinas Minority Supplier Development Council's choice of holding the conference in Charleston. In addition, the Charleston County SBE Program is a sponsor for the event and will have a booth set up during the conference.

County staff will use the opportunity to register local small businesses for the County's growing SBE Program. The Charleston County SBE Program is a race and gender neutral small business development component of the Charleston County Contracts and Procurement Department with an emphasis on growing and enhancing small companies in the county.

The Embassy Suites Hotel and the North Charleston Convention Center are sites for the conference, where corporate executives from the world's largest purchasing organizations and thousands of minority business owners will meet to recognize achievements and continue to build on the supplier diversity tenor for the Carolinas. This year's conference theme is "Supplier Diversity: The Key to Global Success."

### **Business Opportunity Conference – Highlight of Schedule of Events:**

- Tuesday, Aug. 5, from 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.: One-on-one sessions for minority business owners to meet with corporations about potential contracts.
- Tuesday, Aug. 5, from 3 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.: "New Markets" segment for minority business owners to learn about the markets emerging that need suppliers and construction related industries.
- Tuesday, Aug. 5: Seminars and plenary sessions to address the needs of purchasing professionals and minority business owners to address trends and issues in purchasing capacity, building and best practices.
- Tuesday, Aug. 5: Awards dinner in the evening to celebrate corporations and minority business' achievements from the Carolinas region.
- Wednesday, Aug. 6: Business Opportunity tradeshow, which gives corporations an opportunity to meet the top Asian, African American, Hispanic and Native American suppliers.

- Visit <http://msdc.adaptone.com/carolinasmcdc/app/template/eventMgmt%2CEventView.v/m/id/1522> to see the complete schedule of events for the conference.

The Business Opportunity Conference is a forum to extend the reach of minority-owned business enterprises' marketing efforts, showcase their products and services and do business before an estimated 3,000 walk-through participants in the largest Carolinas procurement event of its kind.

Minority suppliers are the fastest-growing segment of today's business landscape. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the rate of growth for minority-owned businesses ranges from more than 25 percent for Asians and 31 percent for Hispanics to 45 percent for Blacks, compared with 10 percent for all of U.S. businesses. This year, America's biggest corporations are expected to spend close to \$100 billion to buy goods and services from minority-owned businesses. Minorities represent 28 percent of the U.S. population, but only 15 percent of the total firms, three percent of gross receipts, and 4 percent of total corporate purchase expenditures.

#### **SIDEBAR – Background Information on Charleston County's SBE Program**

- The Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Program is a small business development component of the Charleston County Contracts and Procurement Department.
- The SBE program is race and gender neutral, with an emphasis on growing and enhancing small companies in the county. The program's concept was developed through a disparity study commissioned by County Council in 2006.
- Charleston County's SBE program has many features to aid small businesses, and is the first of its kind in South Carolina.
- As of July 2008, more than 250 local businesses have become certified.
- The following are requirements for certification under the SBE program:
  - Gross revenues of \$7.5 million or less (as averaged over the previous three years)
  - Actively in for-profit business for the preceding 12 months
  - Eligible owner is involved in the daily operations of the business
- Additional features of the program aim to:
  - Enhance contract competition
  - Establish aspiration goals for SBE firms' participation on County contracts
  - Conduct an outreach program that will aid small businesses in development and ready them for contract competition

For more information on the 2008 Business Opportunity Conference, visit <http://msdc.adaptone.com/carolinasmcdc>.

For more information or to get certified with the Charleston County SBE Program, contact Barrett Tolbert or Susan Hogan with the Charleston County Procurement Office at (843) 958-4750 or e-mail [btolbert@charlestoncounty.org](mailto:btolbert@charlestoncounty.org) or [shogan@charlestoncounty.org](mailto:shogan@charlestoncounty.org).