

Small Business and DVBE Councils Working for You

Have you ever wondered who represents your concerns as a small business or a DVBE on a statewide level? With more than 15,000 California-certified businesses, the State agreed with the private sector that a need existed for a forum where those diverse voices could be heard. The result was the formation of two, unique groups: the Small Business Council and the DVBE Advisory Council.

These two forums, hosted by the Department of General Services (DGS) and the California Department of Veteran's Affairs (CDVA), respectively, provide an open, public meeting where members can share their concerns and provide feedback to the State on policies and practices that affect the small business and DVBE communities.

The councils are made up of your peers and represent large segments of California industry, diverse ethnic associations and a broad geographic coverage.

Open Communication Provides Fresh Perspective

Randall Martinez, a member of the Small Business Council and Executive Vice President and CEO of the certified firm, Cordoba Corporation, believes both councils help bring "perspective" to the issues at hand. In his words, "As we small business folks have no way of fully understanding the vast depth of knowledge it takes to be a state procurement official, it is equally difficult for government employees to fully understand the pressures, the demands, and the intricacies of running a small business. [Council members] bring a fresh perspective to the debate on policy issues from the uniquely small business perspective."

Jack Kirwan, Statewide DVBE Advocate and Chief of the CDVA Veterans Services Division agrees on the benefits of council meetings: "By having all the stakeholders in one place we get to hear each others' perspective on issues. Whether we agree or disagree on solutions, the mere fact that we now understand each other's perspectives helps us work together to improve the program as a whole."

Council Members Provide Valuable Input

DVBE Advisory Council member, Don Gonneville calls the councils a "very positive vehicle" for discussing and resolving important issues. As the President and CEO of Gonneville, Inc., a certified small and DVBE, Mr. Gonneville cited a number of recent successes made possible through the efforts of the DVBE Advisory Council. One successful outcome was the opportunity for DVBE council members to provide input on the recent CSSI (California Strategic Sourcing Initiative) contracting opportunities released by the State. According to Mr. Gonneville, DVBE Advisory Council members were given the opportunity to provide ideas for increasing DVBE participation in those contracts.

Jack Kirwan offers a second example of DVBE council action regarding value-added services that meet the State's requirement that small businesses receiving a bid preference perform a commercially useful function. If a firm is rejected for certification, the DVBE Advisory Council

provides a non-binding peer review. According to Mr. Kirwan, “The peer review has resolved outstanding questions which allowed some business to be certified and, in other cases, helped the firm seeking certification to understand why an adverse decision was made. This has gone a great way to relieving some of the community’s angst about commercially useful function decisions.”

“On the Right Road”

“Without a doubt, the best example of the [Small Business] council working together...can be found in the most recent report on State contracting,” says Randall Martinez. “...overall the state exceeded both (of its) small business and DVBE participation goals.” (Note: In fiscal year 2003—04, the latest year for which published statistics are currently available, small business participation totaled 30.2 percent of all reported State contracts and DVBE participation totaled 3.47 percent).

Want to Be Considered for Council Membership?

Both councils are continuing to add members who meet the eligibility requirements. The DGS and CDVA encourage eligible persons to apply.

For information about the DGS Small Business Council, or to apply for membership, contact Iris Ching, Small Business Council Coordinator, at Iris.Ching@dgs.ca.gov

For information about the DGS Advisory Council, or to apply for membership, contact Joy Rowan at California Department of Veteran’s Affairs, at Joy.Rowan@cdva.ca.gov.

Want to Attend a Council Meeting?

The next Small Business Council meeting is scheduled for December 2, 2005, at DGS Ziggurat Building, 707 3rd Street, 1st Floor, Executive Dining Room, West Sacramento, CA 95605. For more information, contact Iris Ching at Iris.Ching@dgs.ca.gov

The next DVBE Advisory Council meeting is scheduled for November 17, 2005, at the Department of Veteran’s Affairs, 1227 O Street. For more information, contact Joy Rowan at Joy.Rowan@cdva.ca.gov.